

SOVIET
UNDERSTANDING

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SOVIET UNDERSTANDING

BY
RICHARD TERRELL

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CHAPTER I

THE SUBJECT

THIS book is written for three kinds of persons. Firstly, I am writing for a large and growing class of people who feel that in Russia all sorts of important things are going on, yet cannot see where to begin in the search for an adequate understanding. This is not a book of facts. For facts I can refer the curious to an excellent list of books, all written by non-Marxists, and fairly dependable. The list of these books is at the end of this chapter. My object is to introduce the reader to a mode of thinking about Russia, and indeed about all political ideas, of which he may vaguely have heard, but about which the volume of literature is not too easy either to obtain or to read. Russia is a place which, for a variety of quite special reasons, arouses in us a kind of emotional tension, a strange unbalancing of what we fancy to be our critical faculties. I do not believe that many normally vital persons in England or America are unaffected by the spectacle of Russia, however little that spectacle may have entered their

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field of vision. Indeed, most of the attitudes of seeming indifference, of polite evasiveness and of caution which seem to indicate that people are not interested in Russia, in reality cover a very considerable emotional disturbance. It is to those who are conscious of this disturbance, yet who are uncertain of their steps, that I want to address myself in this book. Most of these people, and there are literally millions of them, will have no opportunity to visit Russia during the next few years, and must rely wholly upon talk and reading for the opportunity of getting to grips with themselves about Communism and about the various possibilities before a Russia-conscious age.

Secondly, I want to say something for the benefit of those who fully intend to visit Russia, and thirdly, for those who have already been. I shall explain as carefully and as simply as I can that most of the conflicting viewpoints of people who have seen a little of life in the Soviet Union are not mere personal opinions. A personal opinion is a very subtle and peculiar phenomenon. In a Russian street I have many times watched a couple of tourists exchanging views upon the vast crowd of workers who, in their sun-burned and tattered masses, throng the pavements, shops, street cars and buses in the incessant and practical business of Soviet life. One tourist sees only a

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seething squalor. "It will be twenty years before they catch up to Western standards, and probably they will never catch up." The other tourist flares up instantly. "This is the first workers' republic. Here the proletariat have power at last. Their spirit is riding over the world, and there is a new life coming." Yet both men are standing in the same street. Personal opinions evidently need analysing.

The ordinary tourist and the ordinary reader want a practical guide to the comforts and irritations of life in the Soviet Union. Other matters concern them only in the vaguest way. To listen to the questions of tourists in the great cities of the U.S.S.R. is a revealing experience. One can learn much, not only of human nature in general, but of the special kind of human nature known as Western, by listening carefully to these questions. The ordinary tourist may succeed, in his questionings, in throwing some small glimmer upon the workings of the Soviet community, but he casts a veritable searchlight upon the peculiar confusion of his own brain. The people of the Soviet Union, in their masses, are dominated by very specific notions about what they are doing with their lives, but the Western man, as a rule, has no formulated notions on the subject whatever. His questions, flung out to all points of the moral and logical compass, might well be

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demanded of his own inner self, as well as of the unfortunate Russian guides. Such ideas as he has acquired, during his long years of education in the West, and his subsequent study, if any, have been derived from a host of mutually inconsistent sources. There is a kind of wilderness in his mind, a wilderness of vacuous plenty and plenteous vacuity. When he asks questions, it is rarely that he knows the answers his secret heart desires to know. His desires and his curiosity are unrelated in his consciousness. He bolsters this confusion by describing it as detachment, objectivity, unbiased thinking, and so on. Yet the meanings of these words, their shifting relativity and dubious content whether in Russia or anywhere else, are not really understood by those who most use them. Questions and answers, both formulated in terms of the merest clichés, leave the tourist both satisfied and dissatisfied at the same time. The guides wink at each other.

In the Soviet Union two distinct kinds of *naïveté* come face to face, think past one another and guffaw at each other like clowns. For the ordinary young Soviet citizen there exists a simple scheme of ideas by reference to which all questions may be answered. For the tourist from the capitalist world there is no such simple pattern of ideas. His is the *naïveté* of sense impressions that have been divorced from the activity

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of thought which, like some monster from the tropics, must be shut away in a zoo, a university. For the Soviet citizen thought and action are naïvely united into a single psycho-physical way of living. For the Westerner thought and action are separated, the latter constituting the humdrum business of life, the former a dubious and unintelligible indulgence called philosophy. Each form of *naïveté* either guffaws or flares up at the other, and the result is as amusing or as tragic as one cares to feel. In one Russian city I remember a small incident that tickled me. I was walking with a heavy American couple on their first trip to Europe. They had come straight from Minneapolis to London and thence by boat to Leningrad. With us was a little girl guide, plump, sunburned and smiling, wearing a black beret, cotton dress and handbag. She was a typical, simple student of about eighteen years of age. We arrived at a large, empty church and the guide said gravely: "That was once a church. Now it is an anti-religious museum. You see, our scientists have proved that there is no God and religion is a fraud." This was not the customary manner of introducing middle-aged Americans to the peculiar features of the Soviet landscape, and I was interested to see the effect. The old gentleman chuckled and said: "Well, isn't that just marvellous? What did she say? 'Our scientists

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have proved there is no God.' Can you tell us, missie, how they set about to prove a thing like that?" The lady, however, was rather shocked, and barked in a hoarse voice: "Disgraceful! Dragging the thought of God into the dust."

In Kiev I remember passing a handsome block of new flats on the centre of the town. I was accompanied by a similar group of people. The window-boxes of these flats were full of flowers and the whole building seemed very clean and well constructed. I had seen many blocks far inferior to this and I was impressed by its quality. A somewhat aggressive American asked: "Say, what class of people live on those apartments?" Casually the inevitable reply came from another charming young guide: "Just workers." The American was not satisfied. "Yeah, but I want to know what class of workers?" At this the guide flared up. "You must know that in the Soviet Union we have no classes. Here are only toiling masses . . . all are toiling masses. Comrade Stalin himself, he is just a worker like all the rest." The vacuous guffaws of the tourists were amusing and instructive. The word "God," the word "class": what may they be taken to mean? Philosophy being a purely academic subject, argues the tourist, it is impossible to enquire. The "unbiased" tourist is a person who goes about the world enquiring

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neither the reasons for his own questions nor the meanings of the answers he receives. Almost all conversation, among tourists, is a matter of banded catchwords. The questions posed by travellers from our Western lands are founded, except in a very few instances, not upon a consciously deliberated attitude to personal, social or historical life, but upon a confused, semi-conscious amalgam of perspectives. They do not inquire carefully into the meanings of such expressions as Happiness, Freedom, 'The Workers' State, The Dictatorship of the Proletariat, and so on. For the unconscious mentality of the tourist such words, heard all day long in a land of 175 million inhabitants, have a fixed, obvious meaning, pleasing or repugnant as the case may be. The relativity of adjectival expressions, the relation of logic to language, of value to circumstance, of means to ends, of history to life, all these matters, for the tourist, are relegated to the peculiar study of philosophy with which, of course, real life has nothing to do. The tourist has neither philosophy nor religion, neither mystical insight nor analytical faculty, and yet he has all of these things. He is that common, dangerous thing, modern Western man. No creature knew so much before, and yet so little. No animal, in the previous history of the world, has had at his command so much of the world's power

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and so little of its understanding. For him things and ideas, fact and opinion, are separated by a yawning gulf. In the Western world man feels that his ideas must for ever remain tragically divorced from his actions. His actions are prescribed by the unplanned circles of supply and demand. Any introduction of ethical, political, æsthetic considerations into this charmed circle of given necessity, spells ruin. The result, for the individual who survives, is the gradual growth within him of a weary contempt for the mind and its fruits. Philosophy is despatched to a University. Life is committed to action, blind, uncontrolled and expensively advertised. In the Soviet Union the tourist is divorced both from his daily actions and from the voluntarily abandoned world of ideas. The idiocy of his position is the idiocy of the capitalist world at large. The Soviet mind glitters in its powerfulness. It masters and crushes its environment. It contemplates the intruding tourist as one might watch the stupidity of a sleep-walker. And yet the sleep-walker, also, is a live man.

The Western mind is exhausted by the multitude of its horizons. A little reading, a wealth of words, a mass of history, a river of change—no fixity anywhere. The Soviet mind, emerging suddenly from the past of Russian darkness, moves to its tasks with the

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ease of fresh adaptation. The Western mind has not slept for centuries; it carries with it the droppings of the years, the knowledge of the past, the understanding of things that have long passed away. The perspectives of youth and age confront one another, and there is no sign of any respite from conflict.

I have talked to hundreds of people who have visited the U.S.S.R. It is very seldom that their experiences have resolved the peculiar conflicts of the Western mind. On the boat from London to Lenin-grad, of course, the conflict was incessant, though speculative and anticipatory. The types of human beings were wonderfully representative. The timid Jew from New York City, who had saved up for a lifetime to return for a visit to the Ukrainian village where he was born, hoped to see a community in which the accidents of birth and creed can place no cruel barrier between the minds of men. He was cautious, because he had no great faith in the kindness of rulers anywhere, and he talked very little, but the light of hope in his eyes was unmistakable. On the top deck a group of sun-bathing English people of very mixed social origins (remember that England is a peculiarly aristocratic country) argued. The young daughter of a country parson, going to Moscow as secretarial assistant to an English chemist, expostulated,

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all frowns and smiles: "You talk about the dictatorship of the proletariat, but surely a whole class can't dictate. There must be some special persons at the top who are the real dictators. By the way, I thought the Webbs were awfully good about dictatorship, didn't you?"

A stocky Communist from one of Lord Nuffield's factories replied in a hacking Yorkshire accent: "Yes, comrade, but you've got to go deeper into things than that. Mind you, I've never read Beatrice and Sidney Webb's book, thaw I've a great respect for their intelligence and all that. But they're not Marxists, and it's only the Marxist approach that'll tell you what the dictatorship of the working class really is and what it stands for. What's more, comrade, I've not read very much of Marx, though I've stroogled wi' parts on't, but as a member of the working class myself it coomes simple to me. You'll pardon me for saying it, but you're not a member of the manual working class, are you? You have to realise that that makes it very, very difficult for you to understand the Marxist position. You've got to have very great patience, comrade. I don't suppose you'll find the Soviet Union a very nice place, but you've got to have a lot of patience, comrade. The dictatorship of the proletariat is a very great thing and very difficult to understand for those who are not members of the working class."

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Two graduates in economics left the group and paced the deck together. We were to arrive in Leningrad the next morning.

"I was talking to Professor X at the School of Economics a few days ago about these Trotskyist trials. He's got a rather ingenious theory to explain it all. He says that when the spontaneous working of the price-mechanism is removed, as in Russia, the only possible stimulus to efficiency is fear, with a capital F. In other words, when there is no bankruptcy and all prices are fixed by plan, the only way to weed out inefficiency is by fear of expulsion or shooting. This, of course, applies to the responsible executives. The ordinary worker, of course, is all right and has a marvellous time, but the big bugs at the top must live in a perpetual state of diarrhœa. There's a priceless case on the railways. A short while ago the trains on one of the lines in Siberia were always late. A group of train-drivers were promptly bumped off for sabotage. The result was so damned upsetting for the unfortunate drivers who were lucky enough to be let off that they all lost their nerves the day after the shootings, with the result that half a dozen trains went off the rails. Not a bad story, eh? Anyway, X thinks it's completely impossible to run a system without the profit-and-bankruptcy stimulus, and that most of the so-called

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'wrecking' trials are simply the only alternative remedy for what we should call ordinary inefficiency. Under capitalism you go broke and everyone is thrown on the streets to eat grass. Under collectivism you have the ballyhoo of treason trials, and so on. I think I must write a blurb for the *Economist* on this wonderful theory. 'They'd lap it up, don't you think?'

In the lounge a titled member of the English trade union movement was discussing the plugs in Soviet hotel wash-basins, his favourite topic.

"I assure you that from one end of the country to the other there is not a single basin plug. They tell you it's because they think it's more hygienic to wash in running water, but I strongly suspect that the real reason is sheer inefficiency in the famous five-year plan. The commissar in charge of wash-basins simply forgot to think of plugs, so the defect has to be explained by all this propaganda about hygiene and running water. That's my strong suspicion, anyway. Then again, there's no freedom of criticism in Russia at all. Of course they'll tell you they are as free as ourselves, but in fact they have only the most childish notions about our freedom, or about democracy either." Sniggers and murmurs of assent all round.

In another corner of the lounge two men argued. One, a suave, beautifully dressed and groomed

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American of forty-five, representative of some business whose nature remained a mystery, advocated tact and good will in international relations. "I was born in Russia and know the language and the people. I also know America, for I was raised and educated there. When I'm in Russia I talk Russian like a native and I understand their ways. I guess I know what they feel. They just feel they're going ahead to build a big new country, just as we did in the last century. Their ideas are very different from ours, of course, just as French ideas are different from German ideas. I think people should have the right to criticise their own countries, but not the countries of other people. When I go to England, there are lots of things I don't like in the least, but I make a point of never letting the people know it. In Germany it's just the same. I have no right to criticise. In Russia they have one way of looking at things. In America we have another way. Let each go his own way; that's my way of looking at it."

"Of course, of course, that's quite right. But tell me what *you* think of this Communism business, control of profits and so on. I mean to say, I'm a banker. I don't speculate, except occasionally at racing or football. But if I could see a way of making five hundred pounds by buying some kind of commodity and selling it again, I see no reason why I should be prevented from

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doing so. I mean to say, it's human nature, isn't it, and speculation shows initiative. Why, some of the ablest men I know have speculated all their lives and raised families on it. To stop speculation is to interfere with human nature and make us all like animals. What's your opinion on all this business? You seem an intelligent man?"

"You ask for my opinion," replied the suave American. "I am afraid I have no opinion. When I'm in Russia I just do my business with them exactly according to their law, and when I'm in America I do my business according to a different kind of law, but it's all somehow the same, really, and I don't have any opinions at all."

Then, on the return journey from Leningrad, the minds of the tourists are no less confused. This time, however, the conflict is one of visual images rather than of interpretative ideas. The same Russian factory seems barbarous to one, magnificent to another. The care of children is described by one as the remaking of man, the building of a great humanity. By another it is described as the ruthless sacrifice of individuality to the dogma-ridden values of the mob, and so on.

The Russians have a good Bolshevik phrase, "to reboil oneself." In Bloomsbury it is called, "re-orientation of one's reactions," or something of the

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kind. In Russia it means, not merely a getting to grips with one's own opinions, but a self-discipline having a definite relation to a mode of living and thinking quite outside of oneself, namely, the Bolshevik mode. In the course of writing this book I have boiled and re-boiled my notions until I am now sick of it. I have taken a host of the ideas, the common attitudes of the man in the street to life in general and to Russia in particular, and subjected them to a process of concentrated boiling, in order to stew out of them their social and historical roots. I have treated several leading Russian and Communist ideas in the same way, and my hope is that the reader will try to identify some of his own attitudes among those I have examined. First of all, however, let me give the reader a short dose of myself, in order that he may come to understand the background of the sort of person whose mental strains and stresses push him in the direction of Marxism. For, isolated as I am, my case is fairly typical.

Of my own ideas and attitudes there are, of course, many that I cannot boil or otherwise reduce to manageable pulp, because they emerge rather horribly out of my subconscious mind. This residue of unpleasantness applies to all of us, without exception, so that I need not pretend to cover up characteristics that are particularly awkward. By a preliminary process of

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self-questioning and rather morbid introspection, we prepare ourselves for the task of logical examination of our ideas and the ideas of others. In a book like this, or even in the most private self-questioning, we can only expose the barest outlines of ourselves, and in any case, psycho-analysis is but a young science, and not a very confident one at that.

This book attempts to do various things. The first part of it is supposed to be a kind of sample analysis of some of the commonest of our social attitudes. The result of this analysis is that our attitudes, including our views of Communism and of Russia, are seen to be very much more than personal. When any of us meets a communist or stands in the main street of Leningrad and surveys the crowd, he is not, as it were, a mere mirror, reflecting more or less accurately what lies before his eyes. The mirror of his mind is no ordinary plain surface. The peculiar and unpleasant nature of his subconscious self has already twisted the mirror in some directions. The shape of the society in which he was bred, the class to which he belongs, the stage to which the conflict between the classes in that society has attained, the economic legacy of history, with its cultural implications, all of these things together twist the mirror to a certain perspective, and to no other perspective. Our opinions are free, in the sense that

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we feel ourselves at liberty to change our minds at a moment's notice, but the directions in which we shall actually change them are determined by a whole nexus of conditions in which all ideas have their being. Neither I myself nor Marxism either claim any finality in the analysis of social attitudes. It is suggested only that a certain process of "boiling oneself" and the ideas with which we come in contact will enable us to move a few valuable inches in the direction of Soviet understanding.

The literature described as Marxian has expanded to such an extent that it is becoming both true and false to say that "we are all Marxists now." Many who have never heard of Marx and Engels think by reference to the categories of Marx's sociology; many who think they are Marxists are no such thing, and many who deny the claims of Marxism are themselves quite unable to think at all without borrowing something from the sacred books they scorn so much. The discerning reader will be able to discover to what extent this book

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is a piece of orthodox Marxism and to what extent other writings have influenced me. In any case, orthodoxy is not uniform, for the human beings who are orthodox in any civilisation have all arrived at their position as a result of a long journey through the thickets and jungles of that particular civilisation, which differs from every other. Each comes through scratched and injured in different parts of his body, and no pathway is the same as any other. I have read many books that are not Marxist, besides several of the basic works themselves, and my life experience has been peculiarly English. My roots are buried in the traditions of this and that social class, and in England the classes are constructed on rather different patterns from those in America or France or old Russia. In order to understand my own particular degree of orthodoxy, it is necessary to know a very great deal about English economic and cultural history, quite apart from my own personal psychological make-up.

Yet, although there can be no uniformity in world Marxism, just as there can be no uniformity in world Christianity or world Capitalism, it is necessary to make definitions and to be precise. Otherwise we find ourselves floundering hopelessly in a sea of vagueness, like John Cowper Powys, with his indeterminate leanings to a host of logically inconsistent attitudes,

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and our personal confessions have no positive direction and lead to no definite action.

The phenomena of divine discontent rest largely upon personal factors of maladjustment. Yet, although this is true for all times and all ages, divine discontent in each age must ally itself with the body of philosophical ideas that are logically appropriate to that age, in order to survive. There is no doubt whatever that the only appropriate ideas into which the psychology of discontent may logically flow at the present time are the ideas of Marxism. Fascism, for reasons that will appear later in this book, will not survive. Other ideas, likewise, will pass away. The reason for the futility of ideas is not that they are logically incorrect, though they usually are, but simply that they are inappropriate to the material stage to which society has evolved. Thus, I am trying, in this book, to use Russia as a guide-post, as it were, to a certain relativism. We must measure our ideas, not according to their ideal rightness or wrongness, but according to their logical survival value in the kind of world in which we happen to live. This is the essence of Marxism. In other words, we measure rightness and wrongness according to survival value. Ideas which lead nowhere, which are merely delectable wish-dreams, are futile. When we encounter an ideal, such

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as Liberty or what Christians call Love, we must measure its value, not by its intrinsic qualities alone,* but according to the actual possibilities of our being able to create the sort of world in which such values may be realised. The Marxist rejects the ordinary liberal and the ordinary church-going ideals, not in any way because he despises these things, but because they usually fail to carry with them the implication that liberty and love are like plants which, in order to grow at all, must be planted in a certain kind of soil. In order to obtain that soil, various unpleasant things may have to be done. In other words, action and good feelings are inseparable. You cannot have liberty or love in the sort of society in which it is not physically possible for such good things to appear. The ordinary Christian believes in reasonable ideals, but he has no conception of the relation between these ideals and the sort of society in which he lives. It is on account of this failure to observe the logical network of thought and action, with the debilitating effect of this failure upon the will of society to change itself, that the Marxist calls himself an atheist in connection with religions of all kinds. It is not that the Marxist declares dogmatically: "There is no God." He says, in

* For an example of this kind of ineffective thinking, see Arnaud Reid, *Creative Morality*.—Allen and Unwin.

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effect: "If God refuses to allow me to make this world into a place in which good things may appear, then I shall assume that God does not exist, and I shall proceed to change the world forthwith." If the notion of God prevents good being done, then the notion of God must be abolished. This is common sense.

I have suggested that I am a Marxist. Actually, I have read some significant passages of *Das Kapital* and a few of the works of Engels, Lenin and Stalin. Then I have read the usual collection of books *about* Marxism, and a fair-sized pile of books about the Soviet Union. Last summer I travelled about five thousand miles in that country, and talked to a large number of Russians and others about various aspects of my subject. I do not speak Russian, though I mastered the script and learnt a few useful phrases. I found German very useful indeed, for German is by far the most universally known foreign language among Russians to-day. I was fortunate in having a number of introductions to Russians who spoke either German or English, and occasionally I found my knowledge of French useful. I travelled alone, though with Intourist tickets, and I was never prevented from seeing anything I wanted to. Indeed, I wandered about the streets of the cities and poked my nose into all sorts of buildings without let or hindrance. Sometimes a militia man stopped me.

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Then I would give him to understand that I could not understand him, but that I was "Intourest," and was invariably allowed to go my way. I dressed more or less like a Russian, with the usual unshaven and shabby appearance, and thus managed to wander about completely freely, without arousing hostile curiosity. Many times I walked into children's crèches or clinics and simply explained to the nurse in charge that I was an Englishman and would be delighted if I might be allowed to look round, for I was going on to another place on the following day, and it was impossible to arrange an official visit. Invariably I found that a friendly smile and a look of sympathetic interest worked wonders.

I went to Leningrad, Moscow, Gorki, down the Volga to Stalingrad, to Rostov, Kislovodsk in the Western Caucasus, Orjonikidze, Tiflis via the Georgian Military Highway, Erivan in Armenia, Batum, Sukhum Yalta, Sevastopol, Kharkov, Kiev and finally back to Leningrad again by train. I travelled hard-class everywhere, except on boats and on the journey from Kiev to Leningrad, when I was invited to join an Irish couple who were travelling second-class. When travelling soft on the boats on the Volga and the Black Sea, I spent a good deal of my time among the fourth- and fifth-class passengers, and inspecting the worst

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quarters generally. In all the cities of the Soviet Union that I visited I took long walks out into the very poorest quarters and wandered into many hovels and barracks where the people were living in the most appalling conditions of overcrowding and filth imaginable. Thus I cannot be said to have been "shown" Russia by some mysterious power designed to destroy my critical faculties. I certainly made use of the Intourist guides and went on many useful expeditions with them, sometimes alone and sometimes with a group of foreign tourists. On the other hand, I frequently found that I knew more about Russia from my reading than the guides themselves, though of course this knowledge was of the "blue-book" order only.

This experience is, of course, trivial. Yet my knowledge of Russia and Marxism is rather more than that of most of my readers who have not had to study these things very deeply. Some of them, of course, will know very much more than I do, and they will have little reason to go on with this book. To the rest, however, I do think I have something important to say, and the more readers who care to follow me through the following discussions of various political views, their historical, social and economic roots, and their important relations with Russia, the happier I

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shall be. Russia and her way of living are, whether we like it or not, by far the most significant phenomena of modern history, and we can suffer no damage by attempting to understand them. My point of view is biased, but, as I shall proceed to explain, there can be no really unbiased view in politics and social ethics, and the Soviet Union challenges the views of all of us. The theoretical socialists of an older generation are challenged by the actuality of human nature under living, historical socialism. The rest, who are mostly anti-socialists of one kind or another, are challenged by a gigantic translation of "mere theory" into practice. Thus, the more we know about Russia, and the more we know about the true origins of our own ideas, the better. This book is an experiment in the kind of "self-boiling" recommended by Bolsheviks for all those who are approaching their peculiar view of the world for the first time.

For those who want to get hold of useful facts about the U.S.S.R. I recommend the following books, all of which I have read carefully myself.

Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation? Beatrice and Sidney Webb.—Longmans, 35 /-.

This book is the best general survey of the Soviet system by two experts in the collection of social data of

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every kind. It explains exactly what a soviet is and how it works, and gives a mass of factual information about the Communist Party, the Red Army, the Komsomols, the Pioneers, the Little Octobrists, Shock Brigaders, Udarniks, Socialist Competition, education in Russia, Wall Newspapers, the care of children, hospitals, etc., etc. The authors are not Marxists and they criticise the system in many ways, but their attitude is generally favourable, though unorthodox.

Moscow in the Making. Sir E. D. Simon, Lady Simon, W. A. Robson and J. Jewkes.—Longmans, 7/6.

This book is an account of the working of the Moscow Soviet, and gives a great deal of information about elections, education, finance, industry and about the ten-year plan for the reconstruction of the city. The authors, again, are liberals rather than Marxists, and they all make many criticisms. It is an excellent book, nevertheless.

Soviet Money and Finance. L. E. Hubbard.—Macmillan, 12/6.

This book explains the working of the monetary and economic systems. The author, again, is not a communist, and is critical. On the other hand, his facts are

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good, and the book will be a good general economic text-book on Russia for several years.

I Search for Truth in Russia. Sir Walter Citrine.

This book, by an English trade union leader, gives a great deal of accurate information about Soviet conditions of work and the standard of living of the people. It is extremely critical and written in a tediously carping spirit. The author has scarcely anything to say in favour of the Russians and sneers at them continually. He gives a good account of the standard of living of the mass of the people, however, though he makes no attempt to explain it in any way. It is a good book to read, for it gives one an insight into the sort of mentality possessed by a typical leader of the English Labour movement.

The U.S.S.R. Handbook, published by Victor Gollancz, 15/-.

This contains an enormous mass of information of every kind, compiled largely by the Soviet Trade Delegation in London.

There are a number of important novels which I have read, all of which can be thoroughly recommended.

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And Quiet Flows the Don. Mikhail Sholokov.—Putnam, 3/6.

This is a great drama of an Ukrainian village during Tsarist days, the war, the revolution and the civil war. It is full of bloodshed and very disturbing, but it is a very valuable novel indeed.

Virgin Soil Upturned, by the same author. This describes the second revolution that took place in Soviet Agricultural conditions in the period 1929-30. It is excellent.

One Life, One Kopeck, by Walter Duranty.—Hamish Hamilton, 7/6.

This book is written by a man who has seen more of modern Russian history than any other foreigner, namely, the *New York Times* correspondent in Moscow since 1921. It describes the career of a typical Bolshevik leader during the war and the civil war. Some such easily written book as this about the "time of troubles" is useful in rounding out one's reading on Russia.

Under Moscow Skies, by Maurice Hindus.—Victor Gollancz, 10/6.

This long novel describes life in Moscow during the very important period of the liquidation of the remnants of the middle classes in 1929-30. The sex

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parts of the book are rather weak, but the rest of the picture is first-rate. By reading this book one gets a true feeling for the country.

Then I would also recommend Walter Duranty's journalistic book called *I Write as I Please*.—Hamish Hamilton, 12/6. This is a very readable and exciting account of Mr. Duranty's experiences in Russia since 1921.

I would also recommend Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*. His rather idiotic carping against Stalin throughout the book is irritating, but Trotsky writes well, and the history makes excellent reading. It was written before the author's attitude developed along its present lines to the fullest extent.

Soviet Geography, by N. Mikhaylov.—Methuen.

This book describes the geography and economics of the U.S.S.R. from the point of view of the Plans. It is written in an exciting, rather too "superlative" style—but it contains a vast amount of interesting information.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

THE Soviet Union attracted me, not so much because I expected to find there a Heaven on Earth, nor even because I wanted to discover the Truth, like Sir Walter Citrine, but because I was interested in history. Standards of living and the immediate attractions and disadvantages of Soviet life were not very important for me, though I was pleased to notice some of these things by the way. I went to the country in a thoroughly "inhuman" frame of mind, and this cold-bloodedness has not been dissolved away by anything I have seen in Russia. I was and remain primarily interested in those movements in thought and action which transcend the aspirations of individual human beings, yet seize all individuals in their grasp. Russia presented to my very English eyes a pageant of movement, of direction, rather than a series of "stills" upon which my supposedly dutiful human nature was to be expected to generalise in terms of approval and disapproval. I have also paid several

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visits to Fascist Italy. When I see a tired, hungry workman, badly housed, fed and warmed, in Italy I burn with a terrible rage and hatred of Fascism. When I see a tired, hungry workman, badly housed, fed and warmed in the Soviet Union, I do not burn with rage at all. In other words, I am not interested in the state of things as they are when I see them so much as in the direction in which these things are moving. Human beings live, work and die. They enjoy themselves and suffer. I envy some their good fortune. I thank Heaven I am not in the shoes of others. The various moods of man's experience surround us continuously. I have seen the ordinary moods of human beings in London, Paris, Rome, Vienna, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Havana and New York and in a host of other places, for it has been my peculiar fortune to have mooched about this world. I went all round South America and far into the interior without running into a single revolution, and I am too young to have seen much either of the last war in Europe or even of the strike in England in 1926. In other words, I have watched human beings in their natural habitat, in the ordinary business of living in various forms of capitalist society, and I have seen ordinary daily living in the Soviet Union. Yet, for strange reasons understood perhaps only by psycho-analysts I have read

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too many dry books and lived too much of a contemplative life myself to be vastly stimulated by the bare mediocrity of the human picture when it is regarded as a "still," a motionless photograph of misery or smiling peasants. What does interest me is the long and complicated manner in which things have arrived at their present predicament, and the direction in which things will continue to move. All things, even the rocks and towers of the Andes themselves, are moving. We are the very stuffing of history, from which there is no possible escape, even by suicide. Everything that we do is a part of the pattern of history. The ordinary workers of Moscow, London and Rome are living, not merely in the unthinking anguish and sensation of privacy, but in a single pageant of change.

Now history is a matter of deeds and ideas. Action and thinking are inseparably linked. It is not possible to think without acting nor to act without thinking, though there is a sense in which the two may be said to be divorced. In order to sit down and think, one must have eaten a meal some time. In order for me to eat a meal, the whole universe must agitate itself in such a way that food shall become available to me. This is lucky for me, but not so lucky for some other person. Again, if I sit down and think, I am prevented from behaving in some other way, and this must alter the

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universe to some extent in the future. Not only are thought and action inseparable, but all thought and all action have social implications. In other words, there is no such animal as a true hermit, a creature separated totally from all connection with society. For, in order to go and live in a desert, the hermit must leave his social group, which must affect that group in various ways. Nobody can do anything without affecting society in some way or other. Similarly, nobody is really outside politics, for politics is simply an aspect of the behaviour of society. Thus, thought and action, man and society, society and the universe, are physically linked together into a single organic whole of movement and direction.

Bearing this common-sense notion of material unity in mind, let us consider the business of the occurrence of ideas. Human thought works in two ways, namely, by analysis and by synthesis. In order to think at all, we must have something to think about. We are obliged, first, to isolate the object of our attention from its surroundings, to detach it from the infinity of irrelevant objects with which it is connected. This is analysis. Secondly, we have to make decisions about action. We have to decide what to do. The object that we have isolated by analysis must once more be related to the universe from which it was abstracted. This is

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synthesis. A decision involves the two processes, carried on almost simultaneously in the mind, of analysis and synthesis.

Now since, in the passage of time, the environment of man changes, both on its own account and in virtue of man's doings, the objects of analysis and the social requirements of synthesis must also change. In other words, the situations about which man has to contemplate, and the sorts of decisions he has to make, are changing all the time. This change, it should be noted carefully, is a matter, not of thought alone, nor of the material world alone, but of both. Unless the material world changes in some way, man's thoughts do not change. Confronted by a stationary world, man's thoughts are stationary. That is to say, he is not immobile, but his thoughts are in the nature of custom-reactions, and primitive. He changes his thoughts, but not his way of thinking. If we define the primitive as the mode of thinking that is the reflection of a world which does not greatly change, we shall have to describe as relatively primitive all habit and custom of every kind. No life is completely changeless, and so no thought can be completely primitive. Our use of the word primitive is thus a purely relative one, and it implies no value judgment at all, for many stable customs, though primitive, may be valuable.

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A historical perspective, a concept used rather a lot in this book, is an attitude which, explicitly in the works of philosophers and almost unconsciously in the moral intuitions of the masses of men, justifies and gives momentum to the historical changes through which society passes. Action and thought, feeling and philosophy, are all to be considered as one organic historical unity. Perspectives emerge in history as attitudes without which certain tasks could not have been accomplished or, in the absence of which, different tasks would have been attempted. Fundamentally, on this interpretation, men do not act in one way and think in another. Their views of the universe derive from situations in which, at various times, they happen to find themselves. If this be not the case, if ideas simply occur *in vacuo*, or descend from the sky, or spring straight out of a detached "consciousness," or, in Hegelian fashion, "work themselves out" like plants growing in a purely spiritual soil, then mind and matter must belong to different orders of existence. This latter view, implying a mysterious independence of thought from action, mind from matter, is excluded from this book. My interpretation of historical perspectives, therefore, is materialist. Every historical perspective, including that of Soviet Communism, must be regarded not merely as a product of human

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mentality, nor of any independent spirit, principle or consciousness, but as an aspect of a much wider situation, a situation to be regarded as an organic psycho-physical whole. The mental, in other words, is merely a verbal aspect of the physical. Any thought is also a movement of brains and nerves. Any thought, ultimately, may be described by the neurologist in terms of the physical happenings in the brain and body in which it consists.

To use the word "mind" and to use another word "brain" is not to discuss different kinds of things, but to discuss the same thing in two different languages, namely, those of psychology and physiology respectively. Thus, there is no "mind stuff" which has no physical dimensions. Ideas are simply the behaviour of some physical stuff called brain, just as sound waves are simply the behaviour of certain gases or atmospheres. When certain things happen in the sky, it may be described by some as sunsets, and by others as the behaviour of certain particles of stuff in the atmosphere. It is simply a matter of appropriate language. I may describe a man's prayers as spiritual emanations (whatever that means), or as some kind of physical behaviour in his body and brains. The essential thing to bear in mind is that there are not two distinct worlds of stuff, namely, thought stuff and thing stuff. Thought stuff is

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simply the behaviour of thing stuff. Just as there can be no distinct substance called pinkness, but only a physical object having the abstract attribute of pinkness, so there can be no idea stuff which is not simply a way in which physical things, brains and bodies are behaving.

I have dealt above in a pretty crude way with the unity of mind and matter. Now I am afraid I must treat the scientific process of abstraction in a similar manner. This is necessary, because I shall be obliged, in what follows, to talk about such things as Protestantism, Capitalism, Bourgeoisdom, Catholicism, the Middle Class, Non-Conformism, Quietism, all of which are abstractions. I shall also be discussing things like the Middle Ages, Antiquity, Slavery, which are also abstractions, and I shall be generalising about the relationships between these abstractions in a manner that I think is tentatively scientific. To do so, however, involves the attempt to explain briefly the general basis of my method. All this business is quite definitely connected with Russia and Communism, or rather, it is connected with my special way of looking at these formidable subjects. Later on, when I have got all this philosophy off my chest, the book will become less long-winded, pompous and obscure, and the reader will be able to turn his mind to more entertaining

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subjects, such as Bolshevism, children's crèches, economics and the Communist Party and my impressions of Stakhanovism, and so on. In the meanwhile I must devote myself to the meaning of abstraction and of historical perspectives.

I am assuming, in this book, not only that mind and matter are indivisible, but that, for the very reason of this unity, scientific law is operative in the field of ideas in the same way as it operates in the world of physical entities. That is to say, just as law is the principle of explanation of any physical phenomenon, so also is law the correct principle of the explanation of the occurrence of ideas. Now, abstraction is the primary method of science. Without abstraction there can be no law, but only a summary of disconnected objects or events. If any phenomenon has to be explained, it must first of all be abstracted from other phenomena amid which it occurs in actuality, and then its conditions or causes must be discovered and isolated from *their* environment of irrelevant causes and effects. In actuality every phenomenon is connected with every other. The cause of this phenomenon X is also a cause of others, Y and Z, and all exist, or may exist, simultaneously and be the causes of still others, and so on *ad infinitum*. This vast complexity of cause and effect, condition and function applies equally to ideas

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and to everything in the universe. Science abstracts in the following manner. Given conditions $X Y Z$ (i.e. and no other conditions, other conditions being equal), then functions $A B C$ will occur, independently of time and space. When I say "independently of time and space" I mean simply that scientific laws, being abstract, are universal, and never special instances. Given conditions $X Y Z$ at any time and in any place, provided other things are equal, functions $A B C$ will occur. Laws, which are what the scientist understands by truth, are therefore independent of time, space and opinion. It is not a matter of opinion that falling bodies in a vacuum fall at a certain speed, neither does it matter whether the experiment is tried to-day or yesterday, nor whether you try it in Sussex or Madrid. All that is essential to a scientific law is that it should concern the behaviour of entirely abstract entities. This pencil, or this actual bomb, will not fall to the ground exactly according to the laws connected with falling bodies. All sorts of other laws must be introduced in order to discover exactly the speed at which any actual pencil or bomb will fall to the ground at any given place and time, and even then, the actual behaviour of the bomb or pencil can only be estimated approximately. Thus an exact law must be entirely abstract in order to be true, and no actual concrete

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phenomenon obeys any single abstract law in its behaviour. As we saw, all actual things and ideas are connected together into a single unity of moving fact. On the other hand, scientific laws are all quite distinct and discreet and abstract. The truths of science are, like Plato's ideas, pure, timeless, spaceless, and true apart from anybody's opinion about them. Actual things, however, are all related to special conditions of time, space and opinion. Nothing concrete is pure and detached. Nothing is abstract unless it is pure and detached. Actuality is confused, not because scientific laws are complex, but because more of them are operating in any given situation than it is possible for science to cope with. To account completely for any actual thing—say, the Russian Revolution or the buzzing of a certain fly's wings in a certain spot in a certain garden in Sussex at exactly three p.m. on May 10th, 1936—would involve more explanation than it is possible for the entire body of scientific knowledge to supply. This is not because there is any mystery about either the Russian Revolution or the fly's buzzing. It is simply because, in actuality, all things are connected together, and science explains things only by artificially abstracting them, or splitting them up. Thus, it abstracts certain parts of a situation, such as the elements of class conflict in revolutions, or the kind of

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atmospheric disturbance that causes sounds similar to that of the fly's wings, and tries to make generalisations about them. The fact that any actual event is not entirely explicable by scientific knowledge need not be regarded as mysterious. Indeed, if we regard everything not yet understood as mysterious, we slip once more into the dualistic mode of thought, according to which there exists a peculiar universe of happenings of a mental or spiritual nature alongside of another universe which is the field of ascertainable knowledge. The "mystery" of nature is largely a matter of our straightforward ignorance of nature's workings, and largely a matter of convenience. It is always convenient to stop probing any event for significant generalisations at some point which is reached before the phenomenon can be fully explained. Here again is an example of the relativity of knowledge. The fullness and completeness of knowledge are never absolute, but is relative merely to its usefulness in any special case.

In making abstract generalisations about various historical perspectives, my purpose is not to go very deeply into any of these perspectives, but merely to show how they may be explained largely by the historical circumstances in which they have arisen. These circumstances, quite obviously, must be of a material and economic nature. This, I think, becomes as clear

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as daylight in most of the cases in which it is possible to generalise at all. Indeed, it is the very clarity of the Marxist understanding of social ideas and ideals, which causes this understanding to be rejected so fiercely. People are always unwilling to admit that their most cherished ideals are usually those ideals which suit their pockets most adequately. The objection to Marxism is largely of this psychological order.

The rest of this chapter is designed to get the reader thoroughly accustomed to looking at social ideals and the various perspectives that have dominated mankind for centuries as though they were so many doughnuts or other mundane objects, instead of as spiritual principles of virtuousness demanding any special respect. This does not mean that these ideas of goodness and badness are not logically watertight, nor that I am encouraging people to set moral scruples at nought. I suggest only that we should look at moral scruples as though they were nuts and bolts in a motor car. Nuts and bolts have to be of various shapes and sizes in order to be used for various purposes. In our modern society we can no more do without moral ideas than we can drive our motor cars without the proper kinds of nuts and bolts. My object, and the object of Marxism, is to classify social ideals according to the circumstances in which they arose and the special

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purposes and needs they served, and, more important still, the classes of persons in society whose requirements they most suited. In order to do this, however, we are bound to reduce whole epochs of historical time to single abstractions, and to speak of whole batches of ideas as though they were fairly unified attitudes. To abstract in this way is no less respectable in the science of society than are other kinds of abstraction in other branches of knowledge. Our justification, in this book, rests upon the special purpose we have in mind. Thus, for example, Nonconformist Christianity is one perspective. Hindu asceticism is another. If they have anything in common, say, the ascetic element, then it may well be that the conditions of their occurrence had also something in common. In our search for a common element in the material conditions of India and early nineteenth-century England, we may go wrong. But we may go right. We are in any case doing no more than the primary guesswork which is at the basis of all scientific experiment. It is only the mystics whose susceptibilities we offend.

Thus we may try to classify Soviet ideas among some of the notions that have been associated with the historical activity of men in the past. Such classification is especially needful, in connection with a book for American and English readers. For it may well be that

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the lack of powerful movement in English thought, especially thought about Russia, is a natural reflection of the peculiar confusion of English historical perspectives. The social implication of this confusion is that historical changes, in this island, have been comparatively incomplete. Medieval Feudalism, the attitude of the Renaissance aristocracy, the conservative-liberalism of nineteenth-century capitalism, and the new universalism of communism, each of these phases succeeds its predecessor but partially. In England, for a multitude of reasons, there is never a clean slate. The mop of bloody revolution has never erased completely the diagram of the past, those of the present are never altogether clear, and those of the future are not consciously anticipated. The discovery of a dominant attitude at any phase of English history involves a greater amount of careful abstraction than the discovery of the corresponding attitude in another land. There is ideological confusion elsewhere, but much less of it. America, for instance, is almost entirely a product of the nineteenth-century ideas. Nominalism and capitalism, therefore, in their late or bourgeois stage, are universal and almost undiluted in the United States. It is for this reason that most middle-class Americans have very similar views about Russian collectivism. In the Old Russia, similarly, authoritarian universalism, as in

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ancient Egypt, involving a historical perspective totally alien to that of America, has a history similarly pure. Spain and China, though in vastly different ways, are similarly pure; Germany, France, Italy and Japan follow in varying degrees of ideological confusion.

In modern England, people tend to evade historical discussion from the point of view of wide perspectives and to regard it as a treacherous pastime. For it is only by chance that any two Englishmen adopt the same standpoint when considering a historical movement. Each borrows from the institutional heritage of the English past a different angle of approach. Argument either degenerates into wrangling, or the discussion is politely terminated with an agreement to differ. It is probably on account of the co-existence of a multitude of conflicting traditional attitudes that historical thinking, in England, yields first place to biography, that happy hunting ground in which thinkers may pick and choose among the welter of ideologies without appearing "dogmatic" or "continental."

It is not merely in intellectual matters that the English confusion of horizons is expressed. It is manifest in English law and in the architecture of an English street or village. In a country village, say, in Sussex, one may pick out the styles of different ages, ages abstractly entirely different, yet in practice overlying

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one another in a haphazard manner suggesting an absence of determinate feeling in historical perspective. Late Gothic churches, Tudor beams and cob, Restoration houses of limestone, with their large square rooms and panelling, eighteenth-century aristocratic bricks, with pseudo-Greek porticos and clean classical lines, and finally the bad, styleless structures of the late nineteenth- and twentieth-century jerry-building speculators; all of these houses are occupied to-day, all of them are utilised in the common life of ideological indeterminacy. In London the buildings straggle along the pavements without plan, each expressing a different *Weltanschauung*, the styles of different periods separated from one another by revolutionary changes of feeling, yet now nestling together in a monotone of mutual indifference or polite evasiveness.*

* The same attitude is observable in English law. With regard to unemployment insurance and transitional benefits, the notorious "dole" payments to unemployed persons whose contract of insurance has expired, there is a conflict of opinion and a confused system of legislation, indicating remarkably well the underlying co-existence of different historical perspectives. On the one hand there is the liberal attitude characteristic of capitalism and the Reformation, according to which unemployment "benefit" should be regarded simply as part of an ordinary agreement, entered into by the state, on the one hand, and the insured worker on the other. The "benefit" of the latter depends entirely upon the nature of the agreement into which he happens to have entered, although the "agreement" is entirely compulsory. The careful use of words smothers the mental confusion involved in the conception of a compulsory agreement. On the other hand, there is the communistic view which regards the worker as a member of a community which, as such, must be maintained at given standards of health and fitness. This latter view regards the worker as entitled to benefit on account of his status as a member of a certain community, and regards the liberal criterion of an agreement and a contract as entirely irrelevant. This view is also the

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In order that we may be able to approach the Soviet Communist perspective with the maximum of critical awareness, it is necessary for us to go a little more deeply into this Anglo-Saxon adaptability. For most English and American books about Russia are written by people who, for reasons connected with the confusion of perspectives in the modern mind, reply upon intuitions of wrongness and rightness that are neither elaborated in themselves nor related to the social foundations from which they arise. These ethical intuitions of the average writer consist in a welter of conflicting fragments. They can appeal only to minds whose inner confusion is roughly similar. Yet, in spite of our muddled heritage in the realm of social ideas, we most of us admire clarity, and that English vanity which boasts of its ability to "muddle through" has only the simpering merit of a charmingly lazy mind. A cursory examination of the element of historical good fortune which, at the moment of each successive major crisis, has rescued the English people from the need to respond self-consciously to the dictation of

view of the Soviet Communist, and it is utterly at variance with the Renaissance "freedom" view of nineteenth-century liberalism. Yet these two perspectives are tangled together in an extraordinary manner in all English law. English social legislation, and English mental life generally, is a museum of ideological hybrids. Similar confusion may be found in America, but, in that country, the purity of the capitalistic perspective of individualism is far less contaminated, either by its medieval antecedents or its Communist offspring.

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changes in their environment, should clarify our conception of the value of intellectual muddle.

For these reasons the traveller, before describing what he has seen, even before setting out upon his journey, should probe carefully the nature of his own curiosity. What questions does he set out to answer? And why? To travel without questions in the mind is to travel blindly. To collect information not designed to answer a general questionnaire is not really intelligent, whatever may be the figures of sales of books entitled, *What I Saw in Russia*, *My Search for Truth in the Land of the Bolsheviks*, and so on. Indeed, since "unbiased thinking" is a figment of vague thought, it is essential for the traveller or writer to discover exactly what motivates his journey or his book.

The importance of these remarks will be emphasised if we give a few examples of historical perspectives which are responsible for many of our intuitive attitudes to Russia at the present time.

One especially dominant view starts with a common factor, "human nature," in the light of which historical movements may be judged. This basic element is conceived as part generous, part evil, part methodical, part slovenly, part altruistic, part sensual, part almost everything, but never sublime. This common "nature" is buoyed up for brief moments by the discovery of a

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creed, or under the influence of a powerful leadership. It lifts its earthy head a few inches above its normal stature, and then, exhausted, subsides again into the semi-eternal mediocrity of its true nature. History is a drab line between such gestures of inspiration.

This view adapts itself easily to a robust and vigorous temperament in nearly all ages. Of Russia, the man whose ideas are guided by some such conception as this can say little more than: "Wait and see. They may have faith now, but they won't for long. Human nature will one day come into its own. Classes in the old sense will appear again, together with the usual corruption, sloth and vice. There will, of course, be a few more machines and hospitals, but otherwise the world will just carry on in the old way."

Everyone has heard this view. It is the commonest of all the attitudes of successful people to-day. Faith in human nature, in the opinion of people who regard mankind in this way, implies, not faith in the latent ability of man to rise to higher levels, however such levels are conceived, but a kind of sweet-tempered attitude to the immutable frailty of humanity in general. The successful man, especially the man who is successful in the modern sense of being a good salesman or a clever speculator, in his kindly moments, regards his humble neighbours as unfortunate in an unalterable

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sense. In this he is perfectly correct, and this attitude always emerges in periods when conceptions of status are giving way to those of freedom of contract. Under conceptions of status, as in Feudal society, the great prince regards himself as powerful by the grace of God, or, in Soviet society, by the will of the revolutionary proletariat. Under capitalism the successful man attributes his power to superior qualities of his own. The rest of humanity are not responsible for their weaknesses nor even for the subversiveness of their opinions, and they should be treated with kindness and tipped liberally whenever occasion arises. Money will buy their loyalty. A smile will win their esteem. How can this humble leaven of humanity ever rise to continuous action in pursuit of its Utopian dreams? The answer is obvious. It cannot. In considering history, therefore, it is vain to think of "movements" and "epochs" as having any real significance for the common man. Such happenings are clearly the doings of dominating, ambitious men, or of inspired, irresponsible intellectuals who carry the masses with them only for the twinkling of an eye. When we review, on a shore trip from our cruising liner, the ruins of ages long since passed away, it is not to the spectacular temples, palaces and churches that we should turn our eyes but to the humble dwellings

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of ordinary folk. When we walk the streets of Pompeii we should glance at the places where the money-changers worked with their tablets, their figures and their ordinary business letters. We should try to conceive the ordinary relaxations of humanity, the young lovers walking in sheltered olive groves, just as they walk in Central Park now, of the circuses and the public holidays. They differ in no significant feature from the football matches and Jubilee days of our own time. The famous Parks of Rest and Culture in the Soviet Union are just common products decked out in a new garb of nomenclature. Time is almost meaningless for Human Nature, and capitalism, as you call it, no less normal than copulation.

This attitude, despite its eternal ring, is modern and very urban. In the first place it is secular, and this is a secular age. It is also a successful attitude, expressed by dominant groups whose interests lie logically with the maintenance of the *status quo*. It is remarkable how elastic is the responsiveness of the mind to the dictates of material interests. Almost automatically, the mind adopts those values, and none others, to which material needs direct it. With regard to what we may call the Human Nature view, humanity seems to adopt the forms of permanent mediocrity with special good grace when we view its frailty

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from the spiritual distances of material achievement.

Another view, more common in England than America, has as its foundation a genteel conception of humanity. According to this view, people belong, again "by nature," to a normal hierarchy of functions. The priest, the intellectual, looks after a special field of attention known as "The Spirit." The soldier, the administrator, essentially a conquering-hero type, wields power. The merchant and trader attends to the mysteries of money. He is a sort of exemplary Jew. The working man, or slave, is always a devoted and humble creature, necessary, inferior and "loyal." In this perspective the words "loyalty," "devotion," and so forth, figure very prominently. This is the attitude of the country gentleman, the hunting squire, the parson, village readers of *The Times* and so on. It is also that of the semi-literate agricultural labourer, conceived vaguely as wearing a smock, a clay pipe and a jolly, ruddy beard. It is also, albeit unconsciously, the underlying foundation of much Bloomsbury and Greenwich-Village thinking. It envisages a stable, comfortable, cultivated, well-meaning, harmless sort of civilisation, ruddy of feature and genial in outlook, in which intellectuals wear large black bow ties and peasant girls yodel songs.

Hindu social philosophy is a heightened and explicit

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formulation of this essentially agricultural view of the world. The great castes of Hindu society, Brahma, Kshatrya, Vasya and Sudra, represent stable and permanent human types, recurring forever in the social ordering of men, discernible beneath all the verbal superstructure of historical evolution, destined to endure for ever. Rural Medievalism is the basic form of this perspective in Europe. It survives very strongly in the English scene and almost every English public-school boy is trained to regard himself as a potential country squire. The middle classes, with their terriers, countryfied-looking walking-sticks, flannel trousers and pork-pie hats, emulate the Medieval perspective of their social superiors only at week-ends, but the impulse is very powerful indeed.

In military Prussia, in Poland, Hungary, Rumania and all parts of the world where a fragment of the feudal social structure remains on the land, unsullied by the opinionism of post-Renaissance history, variants of this perspective may be found. It is the principal element in mental life that distinguishes Europe (and especially England) from America. It is a curiously changeless attitude, viable in the language of many theologies, of which perhaps Judaism is the most prominent exception, reconciling saintliness with property, altruism with wealth, eccentricity with

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convention, action with contemplation. It comprises most epistemological hypotheses except those of science, whose chief social value lies in its emphasis upon change. According to this agricultural view, changes in law, custom and institutions are merely disguises of garb. Underneath, the naked forms of society are always to be discovered, expressing blends of good and evil according to the rewards and punishments of some ancient myth. Russia, on this view, is completely smothered by her changing vestments. In time, the eternal perspective will reassert itself, and we shall be able to discern the ancient scheme once more.

Another view emerged from the period of the breakdown of Medieval society. Certain changes in the environment of man in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries rendered Medieval universalism, with its status conceptions of society and its Platonic ethical casuistry, inadequate to the task of providing humanity with a creed suitable for the exploitation of new opportunities. The continent of America was discovered, new routes round Africa to the East were opened up, and money, in the form of bullion, began to circulate in Europe in vastly increasing quantities. The world became, quite literally, a larger place, in which the man with money was exposed to the stimulus of opportunity in a way that was new. Many

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economic pursuits hitherto of minor importance became gradually profitable openings for the investment of the comparatively new stuff, money. Production began to give place, as a method of getting rich, to commerce, the shifting of goods about. The advantage of creating scarcity by holding goods off the market became apparent. The closed Medieval city communes, with their crafts, their ancient channels of international trade, their production for almost immediate consumption, their industry on a "master and apprentice," or status basis, became gradually too confined, too narrow for the new ways of getting a living that were presenting themselves. Above all, the Cathedrals, those great temples of the city communes, could no longer house the spiritual confusion that was emerging. In the countryside the speeding up of the process of the conversion of feudal dues in kind into fixed money payments, or rent, had a similarly disintegrating effect upon the feudal social structure. Land formerly had been regarded as a basic element, held in trust for the secular head of the community, the king who, in turn, derived his authority directly from the Catholic divinity. Now, the mere facts of money and the exchangeability of means of production and commodities were rendering the ancient mode of life, with its Platonic ordering of society upon the land

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according to a spiritual plan, both archaic and inhibitory. Just as the scale of modern economic, scientific and political methods is prescribing a way of life for which capitalism and nationalism are inadequate vehicles of expression, so, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the expansion of the world made the death of the Medieval spirit a historical necessity.

What, in the world of ideas, was to supplant the universal conceptions of Medieval thought? The answer was, and still is, Nominalism. The story of Nominalism begins with heretical attacks on scholasticism and ends with the very reverend W. R. Inge.

The historical function of Nominalism was that of introducing elasticity into the formal Platonisms of Catholic thought. Individuals wanted to make use of a bigger world, both in the "making" of money and in the spending of it in ever newer and newer ways. They wanted to lend and borrow money for speculative and productive purposes on a vastly bigger scale than heretofore. How could such dubious activity, in a Catholic universe, be justified, except by appealing to God in one's own fashion? One had, as it were, to get the matter straight with the Governor in a personal interview. To appeal through the official channels (i.e. through the papacy and the schools) would meet

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with fruitless and discouraging results. Not only were new economic and hedonistic experiments possible, but they needed most painfully a theological justification. How reconcile the manifest advantages of thrift and investment with the scholastic virtue of Charity, so exquisitely symbolised by the gentle figure of the Virgin? How reconcile practical banking with the Medieval laws against usury?

Nominalism consists essentially in a half-denial of Absolute, Universal or Real Truth. Only the inspired faith of the individual, says the Nominalist, can provide justification for action. The Virgin is an archaic, Platonic, universalistic figure, and must be swept aside, or relegated to second place. The Holy Ghost, that symbolic something which "enters into" the individual during the process of prayer, is the only safe guarantor of profitable economic activity. Thrift, rather than Charity, is the virtue held most highly in esteem by the Protestant, ghostly divinity. It is also the most appropriate virtue in an expanding universe. The thriftily virtuous, virtuously thrifty individual, not the community of the brotherhood of Christ, must be the good personality to which every banker should strive to attain. Scotland, not Italy, is the obvious habitat for the Holy Ghost.

Since money provides a far greater variety of forms

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of economic opportunity than the mere tillage of the soil, whose productivity seems always to be "given" as a reward or punishment by Providence, it was reasonable that the modes of theological justification for the new ways of life should be multifarious. Indeed, the opportunities for new experience seemed to be infinite, and the principles of justification, correspondingly, were almost infinitely elastic and tenuous. Any rate of interest, any rent, any wage, any price, provided it facilitated the enterprise in question, had to be justified somehow, and a prolific age was not slow to provide the necessary number of intellectuals for the job. Thus the Renaissance became a reaching out of the human curiosity and the human acquisitive impulses in every direction. The famous Faustian "space" feeling, described by Spengler as the characteristic world outlook of Western Europe, now attained its most expressive level. In painting, a landscape panorama fading into a happy infinity of bluish opportunity, was provided as a background for the great Florentine figures. In Rembrandt's self-analytical portraits one seems to glimpse the same half mystical searching for infinite "experience," a search which, from now onwards, becomes the dominant motive in intellectual produce. In architecture a flamboyance expressing a challenge to the physical

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limitations of hard surfaces, characterises the Baroque. Music, the final illusion of escape from the chains of physical actuality, was just advancing. In sociology, Rabelais, with his hungry and thirsty giants, symbolised the insatiable appetite of healthy man for hedonistic experience of every kind. Machiavelli, in the theory of statecraft, examined the possibilities of realising the domination of the individual will, in society, untrammelled by the scholastic scruples of Medievalism.

Now the Renaissance, with its basis in Nominalism and early capitalist economics, did not disturb Russia as it did Western Europe. This is one of the principal reasons why our intellectuals, in their appraisal of Russia, regard Soviet ideas as a barbarous devastation of European cultural values. For these intellectual values are rooted, not merely in the environment of modern capitalism but in the magnificent flowering of Western thought in the period immediately preceding capitalism as we know it. Indeed, it was the cherished memory of pre-capitalist values which obscured the grossness of nineteenth-century capitalism itself. The facile reproduction of Baroque architectural forms by nineteenth-century mechanical means shows the continuous persistence of a pre-capitalist, pseudo-aristocratic fog over the coarse realities of capitalist

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life. The modern Bloomsbury intellectuals, in their tragic detachment from the social conflict as it exists, see through the sham, but, in their appraisal of modern Russia, fail to understand that their own half-conscious craving is for yet another "modern" world over which the artificial cloak of Renaissance values shall be spread.

It was inevitable that the exultant first expressions of Nominalist escape should be accompanied by, or at any rate be the herald of heart searchings. These heart searchings, on the part of conscientious persons, are to be found in the writings of all those who are concerned, above all things, with the relationship between the individual and the community. Since there is deemed to be no absolute truth, then only the feelings of individuals are of importance. It follows that in the ideal community there must be some harmony, some principle of the reconciliation of conflicting wills.

These heart searchings, naturally enough, were most explicit among the great new middle classes of the late eighteenth century. These intermediate persons shared few of the privileges of the rich, whose security had been one of the rewards of Renaissance initiative, yet felt themselves capable of seizing the helm in social life. The new trade and commerce of the industrial revolution was creating a class of men still less tied to

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the soil than their forbears. This great class of minor employers, merchants, bankers, doctors, and so on, was responsible for the beginnings of nineteenth-century bourgeoisdom, and for the new conception of democracy, culminating in the French revolution of 1789, the English Reform Bill of 1832 and the all-embracing liberal movement of the 'forties and 'fifties. The essential intellectual preoccupation of the age was a kind of blending of Nominalistic Christianity and democratic political leanings. Popular parliamentary institutions, both in central and local government, under the cover of a Christian barrage of pious principles, enabled the new middle classes to continue the struggle for freedom in the exploitation of the still greater opportunities of the industrial age. Both the early Renaissance and the later industrial upswings of Nominalist opportunism sprang from middle layers of society, those layers in which a neat adjustment of repression and opportunity were conducive to the necessary explosiveness of will. For the illiterate working classes the challenge of "new ground," to use the phraseology of Professor Toynbee, was too great. For the middle layers it was just sufficient to give the essential Putsch to the acquisitive wilfulness of man. As will be pointed out in a subsequent chapter, the middle classes of Russia always remained feeble, and

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the corresponding perspectives of Nominalism and middle-class socialism were correspondingly weak. This distinction between Russian and Western economic and social development is vital to an understanding of the local flavour of the communist perspective in modern Russia.

Middle-class socialism, which hinges essentially upon considerations of the relations between the individual and the community, was the final product of nineteenth-century heart searchings. It is only to-day that we are beginning to emerge from the confused and idealistic hopings and dreamings of this age. The great, middle-class concept of Liberty, having essential historical relevance only to a world of expanding horizons for men with "just a little capital," was, like the earlier self-questionings of the Reformation, a necessary element in the material situation. Liberal Socialism, Social Democracy, Political Humanitarianism, and so on, all of these delectable things express the heart searchings of an expanding age, an age when little men who were lifting themselves out of the mean streets of poverty into the new comforts of suburbia, craved to comfort themselves with Christian good feelings towards their neighbours, both above and below, but especially above. Social science, under the ægis of these half-conscious

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motivations, became a conversational study about the proper mutual adjustments of conflicting wills in an imaginary society. The individual "personality," with its private notions of Truth (since the Reformation there could not be any absolute truth) and its small-scale capitalist activities, is regarded as sacred. Democracy is final and ultimate. John Stuart Mill regarded the final arbiter in the realm of ideas as being the "market place" of popular opinion. His phrase becomes relevant the more literally do we interpret his notions of a market place. The idea of a consensus of opinion, a sort of average of Good Notions, must be the nearest approach to The Good Notion that the mind of man could conceive.

This way of thinking, in its modern pseudo-socialist guise, is, as it were, the last ditch of Nominalism. It is utterly unscientific. In science, truth, or law, as we have seen, is never arrived at by taking a consensus of opinion. No opinion is of basic importance in scientific method. Law may be discovered only by controlled experiment and deductive reasoning from given premises. The human personality, for science, is simply a collection of partly understood facts, more or less amenable to experiment and reasoning and differing in no philosophical sense from any other part of the universe. Nominalism and "humanitarianism,"

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in their non-Communist forms, regard the human personality as something mysterious, standing over against a "physical" universe of opportunity, by the taking advantage of which man may become "his best self," to use an old phrase of Professor H. J. Laski.*

Historically, Nominalism serves a purpose only so long as the opportunities of capitalist activity continue to confront the individual man and his sacred personality. When opportunities come to present themselves, not merely to single individuals but to vast communities which must, in order to reap the advantage of new effort, act collectively, then Nominalism loses its historical function. It becomes tenuous and irrelevant to the historical epoch. "Liberty" is already coming to imply, not so much a liberation of personal energy for constructive enterprise, as a kind of guarantee of the liberty to sit and contemplate. It is becoming something refined, spiritual and John Cowper Powysian, not really comprehensible to the ordinary man. To-day, only complete detachment from historical realities, for the intellectual, seems to provide a suitable "atmosphere" for the realisation of liberty. Social "scientists" and writers on politics show a pathetic and historically anæmic hankering for country cottages and solitude. This use of the

* It is unlikely that Professor Laski thinks in this way to-day.

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country cottage as a retreat from the world (in a perfectly literal sense) is a symptom of the historical finale of the nominalistic perspective. When a community's best intellects are closeted in solitude, the divorce between the historical partners, thought and action, is complete.

This over-emphatic and antiquated concentration upon the relation between the individual and the community is expressed by many different kinds of people in many different ways. When Russia is mentioned in discussion, the man in the street instantly thinks of military garrisons of soldiers in blood-stained uniforms, slavery, forced labour camps, food queues, unpunctual trains, mass shootings and other personal inconveniences. These things are abstracted entirely from their material and historical setting by the common, Nominalist mind, and judged in the light of an ideal society, in which individuals are given the maximum of "freedom" and subjected to the minimum of "force." More sensitive persons, especially in their country cottage "retreats," think less concretely of crude Russian unpleasantnesses, but find themselves disturbed by the prospect of what they describe as the Fascist-Communist state, involving a regimentation of human beings, leaving no avenue for contemplation, no haven for the thinking out

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of values, no room for the products of human sensibility whatever.

In all these reactions to Russia a kind of timeless, unreal and unhistorical liberal community is envisaged, to which English life is supposed to approximate more nearly than any other, whilst the Russian "experiment" is regarded as lying at the opposite end of the scale of values altogether.

Now I am not disputing the delectable qualities of the liberal paradise envisaged by people who think in this way. I insist that this view, beautiful and universally desirable as it is, is in no way historical and provides no key to the understanding of any historical event, such as the Russian revolution, whatever. It is quite useless to think of Russia, or of collectivist motivation anywhere, or of any great cataract in the flow of historical time, if all observed phenomena are to be judged merely from the viewpoint of some timeless desideratum, say, of political liberty. Yet this, precisely, is the task to which most travellers in Russia have addressed themselves, and which guides the ordinary reader and thinker in England and America.

It should be borne in mind that the ideal liberal community with which all the communities of history, without exception, are so uselessly compared, is something that was conceived, or at any rate became

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important as far as we are concerned, at a definite period of time, emerging, as it did, out of real economic relationships existing at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In spite of its appearance of timelessness, the ideal is in reality a normal historical perspective, which served the practical purpose of liberating the early middle classes from the burdens laid upon them by a privileged and functionless aristocracy.

Once more, I must remind the reader that I am not expressly concerned with the intrinsic merits of any of these various perspectives. The liberal ideal is excellent. All that I contend is that the idea of liberty has meant different things at different times, and that the liberalism of our most recent memory is simply that variety of it which had its social roots in the economic circumstances of the middle classes at a certain period of modern history. The liberal idea of Greece and the form of liberty that prevailed among the Babylonian merchants of the second millennium B.C. were again different kinds of liberalism and had their roots in still other economic circumstances. Soviet Communism also contains within it a kernel of liberalism, a form of freedom that is strictly appropriate to a machine using civilisation at a certain necessary phase of its development. This last form of liberalism was brought into

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the world in the third volume of Karl Marx's *Kapital*, and it will be discussed in a later chapter. I shall then try to point out that the Communist view of freedom involves a transition, in actual economic history, from one kind of social and economic technique to another, to which this view of freedom is appropriate. In this chapter, let me emphasise again, I am trying to show the essential and temporary relation of any kind of social ideal to the special circumstances in which it appears.

There are, of course, many other historical perspectives which we might examine in order to split the congealed mass of modern thinking about Russia into its constituent elements. Among other views perhaps those of Non-conformism and Indian mysticism deserve most attention as representing stock varieties of Western and Oriental mysticism and asceticism respectively.

Non-conformism arose in England among the working classes of the early nineteenth century as a psychological method of reconciling themselves to the extreme misery of early industrial life. For the herds of destitute, illiterate and disease-ridden factory workers of those days, living in back-to-back hovels and stinking yards, all of them the social victims of the middle-class exultations over the new-found Liberty,

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there was no hope, economic, political or æsthetic. Christianity, that Open Sesame to every kind of transcendental hankering, solved the "spiritual" problems of these masses by its timely emphasis upon the good things to come in the next world. Neither the Virgin Mary, whose celebrated Charity was manifestly not functioning, nor the Holy Ghost, who was fully occupied with the distressed, though comfortable, prayers of the middle classes, was within reach. The other party, "the Lord," accordingly became the natural object of devotional attention for the down-trodden factory workers of Lancashire. Salvation was offered very cheaply to those who would "love" the Lord and abide patiently in the eternal evil of the real world. "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's" was boosted as a slogan of utter surrender to the industrial forces of the time, and a dignified, silent attention upon the early visitation of death was prescribed. For millions of people whose average expectation of life, at birth, did not exceed about twenty-five years of misery to look forward to, the prospect of joining Jesu in the near future was comforting indeed.

This religious attitude, so unlike the religiosity of Oxford and the respectable classes, whose principal "spiritual" problem lay in reconciling the pricks of

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social conscience with the responsibilities of bringing up large families in the new traditions of gentility, is still very strong. The Non-conformist perspective is more nearly true, in the sense that it more accurately reflects the physical world of its adoption, a world that is bestially evil. The doctrine of total submission to the will of man in the service of the "love" of a clean, white and chilly divinity, involves no internal troubles of conscience. It is for this reason that, whereas the Church of England, despite its ability to dispose of democratically minded monarchs as it pleases, will, in the years to come, probably die a painless death of sheer inanition, Non-conformism will either have to be stamped out forcibly or tolerated with extreme care. For, the more nearly compatible is the mode of life of the believer with the ethical principles of his belief, the more durable is the faith. The Non-conformist attitude persists to-day not merely among the very poor in provincial districts, but also among comparatively well-to-do people who have "made good." Religious teaching in early childhood tends to endure throughout the life of the average man, and communities containing a large proportion of persons who have "risen" in society, naturally exhibit a strong Non-conformist element. Scotland and America are full of educated people of this caste of mind, implanted

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firmly in extreme youth. The Non-conformist attitude, both on account of its "truth," i.e., its accurate reflection of social evil, and on account of its positive hostility to all attempts at radical change from the direction in which man is doomed to walk since the Fall of Adam, is, from the point of view of any scientific perspective, such as Communism, quite insidious. With its pathetic scorn of the real world, its diverting of valuable energy into devotional hopings for "pie in the sky when you die," it forms a kind of imponderable intellectual block, surmountable only by what Pareto called "logical derivations," or word-twistings, those gymnastics for which post-Medieval Christianity is notorious.

Non-conformists regard Russia as an unthinkable Bedlam of Sin. On the other hand, Russians disbelieve in the basic sinfulness of the world. Every evil whatsoever, for the simple Communist, can and must be stamped out by the collective ingenuity of mankind. Evil, for the Nonconformist, must be patiently endured, as part of the eternal punishment of man by the dear Lord. There is no reconciliation between these two views other than by means of verbal jugglery. Only the Church of England or the Archbishop of Canterbury is capable of such a feat, but the Church is far too deeply concerned with its own varieties of

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cross-word contortion to bother much with the troubles of dissentient dissenters.

A peculiar characteristic of religious and moral attitudes is that vestiges of their imperative sway over the behaviour of man remain sometimes for generations after the theological notions to which they were originally attached have shrunk into oblivion. Ascetic standards in personal conduct that were originally laid down by specific instructions from without, tend to survive among people who call themselves agnostics. Pleasure, in anything but a vague and ghostly form, is mysteriously and uncomfortably taboo for many people whose ancestors were stuffed with Nonconformism. The world is Evil, and to enjoy Evil is to Fall. Politics and all concern with social purposes is Vanity. "All is Vanity" except spreading the news of the great Light to come. Although the theological nebulosities to which these principles owe their original explanations have lost a good deal of their hypnotic efficiency, yet, on account of the contagious nature of attitudes, as distinct from trains of thinking, they remain firmly implanted in the minds of many almost rational persons to-day. All sorts of sexual taboos and semi-teetotalisms, especially in America and Scotland, are observed by people who are not practising Nonconformists. The widespread

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exhibition of pompous indignation at the projected marriage of the unfortunate Edward VIII of England was not confined to religious-minded persons, but emanated from minds saturated in transcendentalism in early youth. The success of the church-cum-cabinet-bolstered press campaign against the distressed monarch seems to prove my thesis. The support given by the Labour Party illustrates its danger.*

Now this Nonconformism, this vague goose-fleshiness about pleasure and desire, whether it be sexually passionate or mildly contemplative, is totally incompatible with the Soviet view of the good life. Moreover, in the past the Russians have had perhaps the smallest dose of squeamish asceticism of all the peoples of Europe. This should be borne in mind in any serious comparisons between Russian and European perspectives. The open rustic brutality of Russian peasant history was always a foundation for straightforward revolutionism and blood-letting. The dark and gloomy squalor of English working-class history, with its memories of grimy, bug-ridden city hovels, its cholera epidemics and consumption, on the other hand, was a suitable foundation for religious escapism. In the Russian landscape there existed

* I do not imply that we should have adopted a sentimental attitude to this dynastic pantomime. I mean only that the Nonconformist attitude lacks a certain hard-boiledness.

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always the possibility of seizing the land and utilising it directly for the benefit of the peasants. The direct and obvious dependence of the nobility upon the peasants was the essential element in a régime of force. But, if force could keep the peasants down, it could also raise them up. A straightforward opportunity always lay open to the people, provided they could muster sufficient thunder. This agricultural situation was totally different from the cramped darkness of the industrial cities of England. Here the only suggestion of escape was the small strip of blue sky above the lines of brick and soot.*

Here I am suggesting that asceticism and Non-conformism are rooted in blind alleys and despair. It is fairly true that when poor people see no hope in this world, they turn away for comfort to hopes for After Life. Even more characteristic of material misery is the tendency to attribute the evil of the world to original sin, or to some appalling destiny of eternal woe, from which there is not, and should not be, any release in life. Perhaps this generalisation, especially applicable to periods when the only thought-mechanism is theological, also applies to the asceticism of the East. Indian intellectuals, even the most Westernised, seem to think ascetically and their reaction to Russia

* "There is a happy land,
Far, Far away!"

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tends to have the evasiveness of asceticism in general.

Let us elaborate this theory of the intimate connection between social blind alleys and asceticism in connection with India. Indians with whom I have discussed it describe it as not without interest, and it has an important relation to the Russian background.

Since about the eighth century B.C. India's intellectuals have tended to view the flux of actual things as evanescent and futile. Desire breeds only misery. The doings of man are the products of desire, and are wretched for that reason. Every material achievement yields also its issue of misery. That seems to be the nature of things, ordained for all time and immutable. The cosmic trilogies of Indian religion are all tragic symbolisms of the processes of creation, preservation and destruction, and all degrees of goodness are degrees of approximation to a Bliss of Nothingness, a state of non-desire.

All this seems to imply a necessary hopelessness in the social environment of India, a hopelessness without which such devastating ideas do not seem to have any *raison d'être*. This dead hopelessness, I suggest, lay in the age-long conflict between Nomadic and Agricultural philosophical needs. Whereas the people of Egypt, a land of agriculture, tended, on the whole, to resist successfully the attacks of invading

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nomads, the people of India happened always to be beaten by them. Agricultural India has been subjected to successive epochs of rule by powerful minorities of nomadic conquerors. India, for geographic reasons, possessed no Cossack armies to defend her frontiers from the attacks of predatory hordes. She raised up no Thotmes, no Rameses to thrust back and arm her frontiers on the mountain walls of the North-West. What proved unfeasible to the British expeditions to Afghanistan was always impracticable for the earlier agriculturalists of the Indus and Ganges valleys.

Now Nomadism and Agriculture must be forever bad bedfellows. Their offspring must always be the children of a hopeless marriage. Nomadism is the response to the challenge of desert life. The wanderers of the Asiatic steppe and the North African wastes must live by a creed of plunder. Corn must be filched from the Sown. Women must be seized from the agricultural peoples of adjoining valleys in order to maintain a population under conditions that are not conducive to human life. A savage philosophy, most perfectly expressed by the greatest of all nomads, Jenghiz Khan, a philosophy of swiftness, plunder, rape, conquest and flight, is essential to the nomadic way of life. The predatory code must be glorified in order that nomadic man shall survive. Agricultural conceptions of

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goodness must always, and quite correctly, amount to sedition among the peoples of the Steppe.

Agricultural and urban life, on the other hand, are equally exacting in their requirements of precisely opposite virtues. Robbery, violence and aggressiveness must be taboo in any agricultural community, in order that the fields may produce grain and the workshops goods. The aggressiveness of Nomadism is no less destructive of agricultural productivity than modern Fascism, with its intrinsically hostile conception of national glory, is a perpetual danger to modern constructive life. Just as the great Egyptian armies were needed to throw out the Nomadic Hyksos and to thrust back the Syrians and Assyrians, so, in modern Europe, the destructive, atavistic notions of Nordic and Roman glory must be crushed by defensive armies of workers, pledged to defend the constructive values of science. The alternative is akin to the fate of India during nearly two thousand years of predatory exploitation by nomads.

India was conquered by nomads and the agriculturalists were never technically strong enough to resist them. But although the Nomadic rule, first by the semi-mythical Aryans of about the twelfth century B.C., whose descendants were responsible for the Rigveda of the eighth and seventh centuries B.C., and

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for the great trilogies of Hinduism of the early centuries A.D., and later by Islam, was that of conquerors, they were conquerors in a land of agriculture, for which their peculiar virtues were inappropriate. In the desert a militaristic, aggressive, pleasure-loving philosophy is an essential weapon of survival. In an agricultural plain such a philosophy is disastrous both to the successful cultivation of the soil and to the moral fibre of the rulers. In India neither the pure values of Nomadism, for reasons of incompatibility with its environment, nor the values of agricultural life, because the primitive agriculturalists were defeated, were ever entirely dominant. Degenerate Nomadism, drunk with the glory of conquest, never seemed utterly to dissolve. Agriculture, on account of successive waves of invasion and inter-state rivalry among rulers (*cf.* modern balance-of-power politics in Europe), was always subservient to its domination. The intellectual reaction to this age-long dilemma of Dual Power, this unstable "equilibrium" of social and ideological forces, was asceticism and despair. At the end of our own period, when capitalism is drawing to its close, when collectivism, outside Russia, is but incipient, the reaction to the Dual Power (Fascism or Communism, Left or Right) is also of an escapist order, the hankering for the country cottage. This same

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country-cottage yearning was at the bottom of Indian mysticism. Whether it were the quiet and studious semi-scientific mysticism of the early period under the influence of Yājñavalkya and his yearning for impersonal unity with an ultimate "essence," the Atman, or air, or the subsequent escape of Buddhist quietism, or the saintly attitude of the Mahatma Gandhi, with his many female followers, or even the "All is Vanity" attitude of devout Moslems, it was, and remains, a mode of escape from the futility of a dual power. The historical forces and ideologies were for ever irreconcilable, having their roots deep in the Indian past. Not until the Dual Power has been rendered irrelevant by some other struggle—say, the political and economic struggle between peasant and zamindar—will the ancient futility of moribund asceticism be cast aside. When India begins to fight for physical as well as spiritual food, a new age may begin. Perhaps the substitution of a Nehru for a Gandhi will prove portentous in this regard.*

This chapter dealing with various perspectives has a definite purpose in connection with our consideration of Soviet Communism. We are dealing with a certain view of the world that is appropriate to certain

* This was written before the success of the Congress Party in the provincial elections in February 1937.

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historical conditions. Analytically, we may consider Communism in the abstract, in which case we may discuss the material and social conditions of its appearance in society at large. Synthetically, we may return from abstract thinking to the setting in which the Communist perspective expresses itself in Russia. These processes will enable us to clarify our notions about the distinctions between analytical and synthetic Communism, between theory and practice. This switching backwards and forwards from analysis to synthesis may be applied with profit not merely to Communism but to every perspective that has appeared in the history of the world. For example, we may take a perspective such as that of the ancient Greeks. Analytically, we may try to classify the main conditions compatible with the Greek city state view of society: mercantile trade, certain forms of individual craftsmanship, a geography rendering state centralism difficult, a way of life demanding *ad hoc* codes of rational law and order under which traders and landowners may conduct their affairs. Wealth must be sufficiently great for the workers, or slaves, to be able to support a body of *élite*, the citizenry. These are some of the analytical foundations of the Greek view of life, without which the Republic of Plato, or the "New Constitution" of Cleisthenes could not

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possibly have been written or constructed. Synthetically, if we were to delve deeper into classical history we should be able to apply these theoretical considerations to a dozen distinct Greek cities. In each case (excepting Sparta, whose analytical foundations were distinct) the same general conditions would be found, but with subtle differences, each of which would again require the dual process of analysis and synthesis for its elucidation.

Again, we might take the perspective of Medieval feudalism. Analytically, we should have found common, basic conditions, without which feudalism in any part of Europe would have been impossible. Some of these would be: reliance mainly upon agriculture of lands formerly connected politically and commercially within the framework of the Roman Empire, the existence of a technique of government (horses, bows and arrows and a priesthood) that demanded routine organisation, yet rendered forcible centralism difficult. Certain definite methods of waging war and wielding power (land and Christianity, rather than slaves and money, as in Greece) implied a social structure very like that of feudal Europe. Synthetically, however, the arrangement of these conditions varied considerably in different parts of Europe. In Italy, on account of the chopped-up nature of the landscape,

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elements of civic classicism survived and altered the general scheme. In Russia, the production of handicraft goods in cities yielded its place to the export of raw materials and slaves, which, in that country alone among the feudal lands, prevented the rise of a powerful burgher class of craftsmen in opposition to the Boyar overlords. Thus, analysis enables us to see the similarities between any perspectives: synthesis points out the differences.

It is important to realise, especially with regard to the appearance of the Communist perspective in every part of the capitalist world, that analysis and synthesis are not merely intellectual exercises. History itself moves in these two ways. Depressed classes think and act analytically. As they rise to power, the working of a programme demands a multitude of synthetic adjustments to particular circumstances. In past history the utopianism of revolutionaries has gradually become the conservatism of tradition. Yet, in the process, which usually takes generations to mature, new social forces and perspectives are generated and cycles of history emerge.

These considerations are designed to raise the discipline of our thinking about the Soviet Union to a somewhat higher level than is common in our English and American worlds.

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We live in a period of history that is unparalleled in many quite peculiar ways with regard to our receptivity to ideas. Historical perspectives, in the past, arose, as it were, locally and spontaneously as part of the psycho-physical situation. Each perspective, whether it were the classical, the Egyptian, the mystic Hindu, the European feudal or capitalistic, was local and therefore successful, because in no case irrelevant to the environment in which it appeared. To-day, however, various factors—the universal literacy of Western humanity, the easy popularisation of ideas, both within the localities of their birth and outside, the need of every dominant group to utilise to the full, as a mode of power, the modern instruments of propaganda—raise us to a new and dangerous level of self-consciousness. In making our choice between various alternative perspectives, we have to decide not only upon perspectives that seem attractive but upon those that have a survival value in our particular surroundings. This becomes all the more difficult when the mobility of perspectives is much greater than the material bases of their existence. The Jesuits of the sixteenth century had to go to South America and there forcibly introduce the historical conditions of their perspective. To-day anybody can, and many do, listen to the Soviet Union over the radio.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

In Spain Germans and Russians are fighting over Fascism and Communism. They fight over analytical problems. Analysis thus assumes universal proportions. Will each part of the world become a microcosm of universal strife, in which there can be no peace until the material conditions compatible with a given perspective are universalised, or will local conditions demand local syntheses? Both, of course, will happen. The historical importance of the Soviet Union lies in connection with this problem. I believe that Russia, Spain, Mexico, South America and perhaps China, will provide examples of a tendency for the conditions of Communism to be created by force. Revolution and war will wipe the bases of all ancient perspectives entirely away, and the history of Russia, with minor variations, will repeat itself in these lands. Communism also will be approached in England, America, France and Germany, but in these cases the bases of the ancient perspectives, some of which we have examined above, will be woven into the new syntheses.

I do not believe this distinction is in conflict with the general tenets of Marxism, as will be explained in the chapter on Bloody or Bloodless Revolution and in the last chapter of this book. We, in the so-called advanced countries, will be profoundly affected by the

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cataclysmic development of the world elsewhere. Just as the war in Spain drives forward the basic alignment of forces in the rest of Europe, so, in America, these forces, analytically identical in the entire capitalist world, will be stimulated to historical activity by the approaching conflicts in Mexico, and probably in Brazil. In these times ahead we shall look deeply into the moral fabric of our existing perspectives. We shall find that all our ideas of right and wrong, of equity and justice, rest, not upon any detached pronouncements from "above," but spring out of the very landscape of our material history. Our discussions of Russia and of Communism will shift to a new level of self-consciousness. It is in anticipation of this movement that this book is written.

CHAPTER III

THE BACKGROUND IN RUSSIA

THE last chapter implied that each major historical perspective is the intellectual framework of attitudes for the development of a specific mode of economic life. In Russia there is now Socialism, and a real revolution has been achieved. A good deal of the rest of this book amounts to an attempt to account for the revolutionary perspective in Russia and to show how Communism in that country must differ, in many important ways, from its counterparts in many parts of the world, especially those that are technically more advanced.

The short-period Marxist-Leninist explanation of the matter is fairly simple. It is based upon an examination of the economic foundations of revolution, which may occur in any part of the capitalist world, independently of the particular stage to which capitalism may have attained. If there be no material basis for revolution, then capitalism will continue to evolve in a single direction. In the event of revolution, however,

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spontaneous evolution is replaced by controlled socialisation under a dictatorship of the proletariat. Left to itself, capitalism would, said Marx, through a long series of automatic booms and depressions, ultimately "negate" itself. Free competition would ultimately give way to cut-throat competition between large concerns and, in the end, cut-throat competition would be replaced by forms of monopoly, involving financial control by an oligarchy of nominally competing groups. By a series of stages, in other words, capitalism would eventually "socialise" itself; that is to say, it would prepare itself, structurally, for expropriation by the democratic power of the age. This, presumably, will be the destiny of the United States, a capitalist universe cut off from the rest of the world. In Europe, on the other hand, capitalism is not so likely to be left to itself in this way. On account of the expanding nature of capitalism, whose development knows no lasting equilibrium, the need for wider and wider markets must inevitably produce conflict between rival groups of monopolists, organising themselves under the terrible banners of nationality. Imperialism was described by Lenin as the final stage of capitalism in the modern world, a world that must go down in a bloody struggle between the "haves" and the "have-nots" among the nations. In the course of

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war and ever-renewed conflict, the conditions of production and distribution must degenerate; gathering misery and anger among the industrial workers of the world must follow. Gradually the exasperation of the workers, obliged either to fight or to produce armaments in a logically chaotic struggle for markets, would know no bounds. The revolutionary slogan: "Workers of the world, unite!" would, by its simple logic, eventually dominate the psychological condition of the exhausted workers and soldiers. The co-existence of advanced technical productivity and universal misery amongst the workers, forced to take sides in the struggles of rival groups of patriotic capitalists, instead of devoting their lives and their energies to rationally planned economic activity for the satisfaction of their crying needs, would dictate, not merely the moment for revolution, but the politics of the revolutionaries. In Western Europe, in 1918, peace was made before the exasperation of the workers had reached this stage. In Russia the war created the conditions of Leninist revolution.

The question of the bloodiness of revolutions and the relativity of revolutionary ethics will be examined in later chapters. Here I would like to postpone further consideration of the specifically Marxian analysis and to devote myself to a description of the

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Russian past. Here I shall take up another kind of historical interpretation, namely, that of Professor A. J. Toynbee, in the light of which a certain colour may be infused into the contrast between the Russian and the Western scenes. I do this deliberately, for Professor Toynbee has employed his interpretative device with imaginative success to almost every major phenomenon of history except the Russian revolution, of which his explanation is, for almost all minds, both feeble and unconvincing. The reasons for this single breakdown are both epistemological and sociological, and I leave their elucidation to more competent Marxists than myself to unravel. I utilise Professor Toynbee's analysis, not because I regard it as finally satisfying, but because it lends itself, in an introductory fashion, to easy exploitation. The value of most historical theories, in fact, lies less in their explanatory character than in their stimulation of historical curiosity. We may utilise rival historical theories as we use the sacred books of the great religions of the world. We are interested, not so much in the nature of the "Truth" purveyed as in the actual history unravelled. The non-Marxist may learn a precious amount of sheer history from delving into the historical parts of "Capital." The non-Fascist may enrich his mind enormously by reading Pareto's great

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work, *The Mind and Society*; the non-mystic, likewise, may fill his mind with valuable historical information by reading the whole of Professor Toynbee's *Study of History* or Spengler's *Decline of the West*, for which, by the way, Professor Toynbee has a healthy dislike.

In order for humanity to do things, to create history, says Professor Toynbee, it is somehow necessary for them to be presented with a Challenge. The word Challenge is simply a dramatisation of the ordinary scientific term "stimulus," a dramatisation involving a modicum of audacity, on the part of the historian, without which any interesting examination of historical "causation" is impossible. The maze of interconnectedness in history must be viewed with a nice balance of scientific modesty, on the one hand, and romantic impulsiveness on the other. It is for this reason that so much of the best history is rather less than pure poetry and rather more than true. According to Professor Toynbee, the movements of history are occasioned by the impact upon the human mind of natural or social challenges. An earthquake, an invasion, a desiccation of the soil, any fairly sudden change in climate, persecution, the existence of a "proletariat" that is incorporated in a civilised society only by force, and so on—all these possibilities impose upon society the absolute necessity, sooner or later, of

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making some adjustment to the situation. In making the adjustment, says Professor Toynbee, not merely is the initial problem solved, but mankind seems to go much further. It develops ideas and directions, "universal churches," cadres of enthusiasts who "drill" the masses into constructive activity, and, in short, into the making of a great destiny.

Marx, in contrast with Professor Toynbee, is concerned far less with the initial impetus to social movement as with the internal dynamics or dialectics of development during the process itself. It must be remembered, of course, that only three volumes of Professor Toynbee's work have as yet appeared, and that he may yet come to treat of the Marxian, or dialectical aspects of internal movements and social relationships in future volumes. Marx and Engels described logical and economic implications of changes in the modes of production, and were not primarily concerned with the psychological conditions under which such changes are initiated. At a certain stage of development, says Engels, a surplus of wealth is produced and a dominant class appears to appropriate it. He then goes straight on to discover the social and economic implications of the rise of the dominant class. Professor Toynbee, on the other hand, is as yet concerned more with the conditions of the initial

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movement, the change causing the initial surplus to be produced at all. Initial changes involve, for him, psychological and mystical impulses in response to challenges.

The problem with which we are dealing, namely, the reasons for Socialism's appearance in Russia, rather than elsewhere, although insoluble without reference to Marx's ideas, is also a problem of "challenge and response" in the Toynbee sense, and Professor Toynbee's answer must surely be that a challenge occurred in Russia that has been experienced only with much less intensity elsewhere.

What was the nature of the challenge? At random, almost, we may note various factors which, taken together, comprised a situation that can only be described as exceedingly challenging: devastation by war, economic collapse of such magnitude that the most primitive means of subsistence could scarcely be produced, a population of armed, desperately poor and hungry people, leaders with the necessary strength of will, and so on.

More important than these things, however, were the conditions of Russian history. In 1917 Russia contained a proletariat of revolutionary temper both in the Marxian and the Toynbee sense. In the Marxian sense the industrial workers were propertyless,

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employed in giant capitalist concerns and fairly well organised in trade unions. Although there was not much actual capitalism per head of the total population, such capitalism as existed had reached a stage of development far in advance of the bulk of capitalist enterprise in England and America. Trotsky, in his monumental work, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, pp. 31 and 21, says:

“Small enterprises, involving less than 100 workers, employed in the United States, in 1914, 35 per cent of the total industrial workers, but in Russia only 17.8 per cent. The two countries had an approximately identical quantity of enterprises, involving 100 to 1,000 workers. But the giant enterprises, above 1,000 workers each, employed in the United States 17.8 per cent of the workers and in Russia 41.4 per cent. For the important industrial districts the latter percentage is still higher: for Petrograd district, 44.4 per cent, and for Moscow district, 57.3 per cent. We get a like result if we compare Russian with British or German industry.”

Thus, in the ordinary Marxist sense, such capitalistic development as existed in Russia before the revolution had reached a highly concentrated level of what Sombart describes as “Spät-Kapitalismus,” or incipient revolution. According to Marx and Engels,

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the progress of capitalism is towards greater and greater concentration of capital into the hands of a few giant monopolistic concerns, the "small man" of the earlier period of competition being gradually driven out as, after each successive depression, financial rationalisation amalgamates multitudes of enterprises into giant combines. It is only when this process has been carried to a certain stage, when very many small proprietors have been reduced to the ranks of the wage-and salary-workers, that the moment either of violent or non-violent revolution arrives. Capitalism, as it were, by elevating itself to a vast scale of concentration, prepares itself for expropriation by the people for whose benefit it is supposed to exist. In other words, capitalism prepares its own negation. There is no doubt that this development had proceeded much further in Russia than elsewhere, in spite of the small amount, *per se*, of capitalism that existed in the country. The vast scale upon which the Petrograd and Moscow and Voronez and Kharkov workers were employed enabled them to combine into extremely effective trade unions, whose strike activity since 1905 had assumed alarming proportions.

In the Toynbee sense (although Professor Toynbee himself does not apply his own theory to this subject), the Russian peasantry of the countryside had also

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formed a "proletariat" with historico-revolutionary implications. According to Professor Toynbee, a "proletariat" is a section of a community that belongs to it only by force or by unwilling consent. It does the "dirty work" without contributing to the cultural or other explicit expression of the civilisation itself. Roman civilisation means, essentially, the body of ideas and institutions, the art and science of the privileged Romans. The vast slave population, upon whose shoulders the entire structure rested, was "in," but not "of" Roman civilisation. The slaves were dragged into Italy from conquered territories, or sold to wealthy Romans by foreign traders. Their traditions were not classical, but alien, primitive and dumb. Significantly, these traditions became the original content of Christianity, at one time a religion of works and deeds. The Roman slaves, therefore, were a "proletariat" in a sense that goes beyond the Marxian meaning. Professor Toynbee's definition, in a footnote on page 41 of *A Study of History*, is as follows:

"The word 'proletariat' is used here and hereafter in this study to mean any social element or group which, in some way" (it is Marx whose main interest is in solving the problem of *how* the phenomenon occurs, namely, as the result of specific conditions of production), "is 'in' but not 'of' any given society at

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any given stage of such society's history. That is, it is used in the sense of the Latin word 'proletarius,' from which it is derived. In the Roman legal terminology, proletarii were citizens who had no entry against their names in the census except their progeny ('proles'). . . . To say that proletarians contribute nothing to the community but their progeny is a euphemism for saying that the community gives them no remuneration for any other contributions that they may make (whether voluntarily or under compulsion) to the common weal. In other words, a 'proletariat' is an element or group in a community which has no 'stake' in the community beyond the fact of its physical existence."

In order to understand the "proletarian" nature of the old Russian peasantry, it is useful to glance at the earliest history of the country and to make some significant comparisons with Western Europe.

Between the eighth and the eleventh centuries, in Western Europe, two important developments took place.* Firstly, Gaul, Britain, Flanders and Western Germany found themselves cut off from the old trade with the Eastern Empire in the Eastern part of the Mediterranean. Until then Marseilles and Barcelona and Genoa had been important ports of trade with the

* For this analysis see Pirenne, *Medieval Cities*.—Clarendon Press, Oxford.

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East. But the Islamic invasion of the Mediterranean put a stop to this continued development to what had been important commercial activity in the Roman Empire. In consequence of this isolation from the East, the countries of the Western Empire were thrown back upon the soil for their entire support. In the consequent intensive cultivation of the soil under the domination of primitive Christian and pagan princes (the divided remnants of the Carolingian Empire), the Feudal system, a system of inalienable and hereditary rights and duties, emerged. Such a system, founded upon agriculture and an absence of large-scale trading, together with a local political system that derived from the bishoprics of the Christian Roman Empire, was contrary to the spirit of commerce, which developed independently. Later on cities were built, first under the protection of the ecclesiastical authority, by merchants and craftsmen on the basis of the exchange of the grain of the countryside for the manufactures of the towns, and short-distance oversea trade. The principal manufactures were textiles and iron goods. Wool was grown in England and the Low Countries and worked into materials by the master craftsmen and their apprentices in the new towns. Bankers and traders conducted the commercial enterprise of the trading Leagues of cities, with their great

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periodical fairs all over North-Western Europe and England. When at last the Crusades against Islam had managed to reopen the Eastern Mediterranean to Western commerce, these cities, with their populations of little craftsmen, grew in importance and imported Oriental metal goods, spices and precious stones (for the use of the feudal nobility and the rich bankers) and other products of the East, including carpets and weapons, in exchange for the textiles and wool of Western Europe.

These two developments, namely, of feudalism and of trading cities based on handicrafts, are of profound importance in contrast with the development of Russian society. In the first place, the initial reliance of the people of the West upon the produce of the soil, with its parallel development of feudalism, scarcely took place in Russia at all. In the second place, when trading and the crafts developed in Western Europe in the tenth and eleventh centuries in the cities, they were essentially based upon skilled work, the fashioning of raw materials into finished products by a special class of persons, the new *burgher* class. It was out of this master and apprentice and small trading class that emerged, first the Medieval city communes, with their revolutionary charters of freedom from the local kings, who lived out in the countryside, and ultimately the

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long history of the middle classes, which constitutes the very essence of European history down to the present day. Russia, for very definite reasons, developed these classes only to a comparatively negligible degree.

Why, then, did Russia never develop a local bourgeoisie with a similar destiny, and why did feudalism fail to develop in quite the same fashion? In the answer to these questions we shall obtain a key to the peculiarly "proletarian" nature, in the Toynbee sense, of the Russian peasantry and, correspondingly, its utter subjection to the domination of an aristocratic nobility right down to revolutionary times.

Firstly, Russia, a land of primitive neolithic life, was invaded in the ninth century by Scandinavian conquerors, the Norsemen, who also pillaged the coasts of Northern Europe at the same period. These conquerors, in Russia, found lying open to them vast opportunities for amassing wealth and the opening up of trade. Russia, unlike Western Europe, was not cut off from Byzantium and the near East by the Islamic invasion. Byzantium, Islam itself and Egypt were easy markets for the sale of all that lay ready for export. And what did lie ready for export? Furs, honey and slaves. Thus manufactures, instead of being produced in the Russian cities, were imported from the East and from Byzantium, and raw materials and slaves exported.

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The Russian lands and forests, together with their primitive inhabitants, were divided up among the invading chiefs entirely upon a commercial basis. The freedom of trade never rendered a consolidation of life upon the soil, after the feudal fashion necessary. The chiefs or boyars, living in the cities (cities of slaves and retainers, not of craftsmen, as in Flanders), did not find it necessary to organise an elaborate system of rights and duties and payments in kind, such as was created in Western Europe, but were free to buy and sell and organise huge foraging and plundering parties, in search of slaves and furs for sale to Byzantium, right from the start. The freedom of contact with Byzantium is illustrated by the early absorption of Byzantine orthodoxy at Kiev, the original capital, and the foundation of St. Sophia in the ninth century.

Thus the ruling power in early Russia was entirely in the hands of an armed merchant ruling class. Manufacture, involving the growth of a special and important class of craftsmen living in cities and setting themselves against a feudal system, was almost non-existent. The trading function, instead of being executed by a more or less outlawed class, outside the feudal system, as in Western Europe, was from the start carried on by the conquering rulers themselves, with the easy support of the new church. The latter

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had not, as in Europe, become adjusted to a feudal agricultural conception of life, with its abjurement of usury and trade and its sanctification of conceptions of status, but was introduced by the trading rulers themselves from Byzantium, a trading city. In Russia, therefore, the medieval foundations of a bourgeoisie, conducting trade and manufacture as distinct historical functions in cities built by themselves, were never laid. Political, economic and ecclesiastical power, from the very outset of Russian history, were entirely in the hands of a single class. The rest of the huge community lived either outside the pale of all civilisation whatever or became the literal chattels of their rulers. A great middle class, growing by absorption from below and by making successive revolutionary thrusts into the aristocratic spheres above them, is almost absent from the bulk of Russian history.

These basic contrasts explain the significance of Peter the Great's reforms and the subsequent Europeanisation of Russian society, all of them changes introduced from above, by the nobility itself. At a time when middle classes were clamouring for power elsewhere, the Russian peasants were actually legally enserfed and the "proletariat" still further proletarianised. Stolypin's agricultural reforms of the early twentieth century were a belated and ill-fated

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attempt by the ruling class to create a solid middle-class bulwark against the rising tide of peasant and worker revolt. Again, the earliest Russian rulers, in order to foster the development of cities, instead of being able to call upon a local bourgeoisie, were obliged to invite a community of Jews from Poland and Germany to form a middle class in the cities of Western Russia. Indeed, the Russian bourgeoisie, even in later days, was always an unwelded and ineffective mass of largely foreign elements. In 1917, as an illustration of this fact, nearly all the capital of Russian industry was owned by the bourgeoisie of France and England and other more historically capitalist countries.

On my journey through many parts of the Russian landscape, the "proletarian" nature of the peasant villages was strikingly brought home to me. In the forest belt of the North, the villages, in their poor, rough clearings, are no more than colourless wooden shacks, of very poor construction. Every building is almost identical with every other, and designed only for the subsistence living that has characterised the Russian peasant's life for nearly a thousand years. No "gentry," no middle-class element, nor the signs of any such element even before the revolution, has left a trace. The obvious signs of middle-class life in every

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Western European or American village are completely absent. In the past the peasants of the Russian villages, living, almost without exception, in the depths of poverty, were one great downtrodden class of equals beneath the heel of an absentee nobility. A middle class, a stepping-stone to "respectability," dating only from very recent reforms, was, by comparison with its parallel in Western Europe, of negligible proportions. The rural dominant class, the nobility, dwelt either on their estates, in mansions far from the peasant masses, or away in the cities, equally distant from the villages. In the South, in the North Caucasus and the Ukraine likewise, although the Cossack peasant huts are often of brick, a similar "proletarian" equality prevailed. Thus, in the Russian countryside, although the people were oppressed, the oppression was by a power alien to themselves in every respect, a power to whose culture the peasantry contributed almost nothing but its labour, and which must have seemed almost mythological in its Olympian distance from the common life. Perhaps the peasants of the French revolution occupied the same position *vis-à-vis* their privileged overlords, though the middle classes of 1789 in France were already more powerful than those of Russia in 1917.

The Russian peasants and the Russian workers were,

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then, in a significant sense, already a "classless" society. Indeed, the intense hatred of the Kulak from the earliest years of this century onwards was precisely on account of the artificial introduction of an exploiting middle element into the Russian social scene. The savage treatment of the Kulaks in the recent collectivisation stage is understandable only in the light of a knowledge of this aspect of Russian history.*

Let us compare this picture with that of Italy before the Fascist rising of 1922. Dr. Herman Finer, in his book, *Mussolini's Italy*, is discussing the middle-class and provincial origins of Fascism. Italy, he says, is a land of small towns and villages.

"These are set in a countryside divided by rivers, divided by the Apennines down the centre, fitted into the valleys in the spurs of the mountains, or high up and out of the way on the hills, separated, in the South, by large tracts of barren, almost desert land, while Sardinia and Sicily are entirely cut off from the mainland. Napoleon cursed these obstacles to conquering Italy. It is very unlike England, which in area is but one-third of Italy, and is almost one great town stretching over the entire country with a few rather large parks to break the urban settlement. Hence,

* See J. Stalin, *Leninism*, Vol. I. Stalin explains, in the Marxian sense, how, in Russia, the peasantry were the "reserves" of the city proletariat. The reasons for this can be described either in the language of Marxism or of Toynbee, as above.

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co-operating with other causes, the great plague of Italy was her *campanilismo*, her parish-pump outlook. . . . The sense of municipal differentiation and patriotism goes back continuously to the remotest age of Italian history."

Such a local and petty bourgeois outlook, an outlook that developed out of the medieval civic and commercial class structure of the Italian city states, with their separate trading, arts and crafts, had no real counterpart in Russia. One Russian village, in its destitute artlessness, is almost identical with every other. The rolling plains, the forests and the arid steppes are vast uniformities, in which any "parish-pump" and civic pride middle-class ideology seems unthinkable. The Russian village either rested dormant and passive or smouldered in revolt, revolt not against local *podestas*, but against a territorially universal absentee nobility. The Russian class conflict was political in the grand sense, never petty and concerned only with local animosities. Or rather, local feeling was merely a particularisation of something wider. Anyone who has read Goncharov's *Oblomov* or Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don*, will understand the difference between the petty bourgeoisdom of Western Europe or America and the almost mystically wider horizons of Old Russia.

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Thus Russian society was unfit, by reason of its unpreparedness, to enter into a capitalistic middle-class conflict; in other words, to engage in the last war. Her attempt to do so, therefore, was followed by disaster. Transport, industry and agriculture and finance and political administration, none could adapt themselves to the conditions of highly capitalised, middle-class controlled war. Ill-armed, ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-transported and without an effective Hearst-Beaverbrook-Northcliffe-Rothermere system of capitalist patriotic propaganda, the Russian armies very logically failed to support the more enterprising allies of the West. Behind the lines economic life also failed. The existence of capitalism and the sufferings of war were the dual challenge to the Russian "proletarian" spirit, in both of the senses employed in this chapter. The proletariat duly responded. Soviet civilisation is the continuation of this response.

In Russia, then, the problems of capitalism have been solved, not because the Russian people are better fitted than other peoples for the solution of the world's problems, but because the challenge to revolutionary and drastic activity was present in their society. Elsewhere, in 1937, the bare, theoretical problems of capitalism still face us, and there is no escaping them. We shall not solve our problems, nor shall we reach

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out into any fields of really constructive endeavour, until the contradictions of our social economic mechanism present us with a sufficient challenge to fire, not merely our poetic imagination but our will. Until then the unemployed, in their masses, will stay unemployed, the factories will remain idle, the hungry will stay hungry and the middle classes will continue to congratulate themselves on the various "freedoms" supposed to exist in their various countries. Economics, until then, will remain the province, in the amusing phraseology of Engels, of "cobweb-spinning eclectic flea-crackers." Tragically great economists, like Thorstein Veblen of America, the most conservative land of all in a universe of "progress," will continue to die in obscurity. Intellectuals in country cottages will continue to explain to one another the "constructive" nature of their Pacifism.

CHAPTER IV

THE RUSSIAN COMMUNIST PERSPECTIVE

IN Russia the dominant perspective, like all those that continue to persist side by side in England, arose out of the conflict of classes. The abstract Marxian pattern of upheaval, involving the "expropriation of the expropriators," the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and the "negation" of capitalism by its own social offspring, the process of the socialisation of the means of production which, like fruit in a garden, have ripened to the stage of readiness for plucking for the community—all these abstract things have realised themselves in the Russian scene. The process described by Marx was abstract. In Russia, it is actual. Thus, just as, in theory, the ripening of fruit is said to follow a prescribed course, whilst the actual ripening of any given fruit is determined by specific variations of climate, soil and the skill of gardeners, so, in Russia, the theory works, but the actual process is Russian and Russian only. A perspective of Communism emerges, therefore, not in the manner of a text-book diagram but like a new plant in the tangible landscape of

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Eastern Europe. Udarnikism, Subotnikism, Stakhanovism, the Red Army, with its special traditions of heroism in the long revolutionary war against the mercenary armies of the intervention; the deep significance of the brick Kremlin walls, in Moscow, with their ancient towers and their golden stars; the golden spire of the Peter and Paul fortress in Leningrad, with its evocation of a fearful memory of tyranny; the flamboyant baroque in red and white stucco, of the Winter Palace, scene of the most dramatic gesture of October; Kiev, with its spires of sun-dazzled gold commanding the hills overlooking the Dnieper: all these immediate and visual things change, in the Russian social scene, like the changing face of the land in the eyes of a painter of impressionist landscapes. Communism is written in the language of these Russian things.

I stood one evening in the Red Square in Moscow and watched the slowly moving procession of workers before the red marble tomb of Lenin. Every evening, when work is over, thousands pass slowly between the guards to see the body of Lenin. They chat quietly or wait in silence. Their eyes are open and their faces awake, never bowed in the humility of the old belief. They smile and talk quietly, a look of normal, rational gravity upon their faces, the look of average workmen

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and workwomen who desire, in passing, to refresh the memory of actual things. As time passes in the Soviet scene, they will come to look, rather with curiosity than their present *gravitas*, at Lenin's body, but there will be no mumbling, no mystical signs of the cross, no lined and haggard faces bowing in the humility of acquiescence in an evil world that is somehow good. No centuries of dumb submission to earthly powers, no dim faith in the gracious disposition of God, a God who is infinitely forgiving, especially to tyrants, and who loves the meekest and gentlest of men, men who trudge home from the dusty steppe to borshtch without meat for ever; no ages of such humility have crushed the revolutionary anger from the workers before Lenin's tomb. They smile, their backs are straight, and they want to see what Lenin's face was really like. They are hard-boiled men and women.

As I stood there the clock in the Kremlin tower above me chimed the hour. I looked at the tall walls of ancient brick and listened. The chime is not resonant and grim, like the bells of Big Ben at Westminster. The Kremlin chime, unexpectedly, is frail, listening to itself, and sad. I found myself generalising about the final chimes in phrases that were wordless, swifter than the bells themselves. Each peal commenced on a high note, not clear and flute-like, but faintly muffled and

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metallic,* and descended in a minor key, sinking away into nothingness. The sighing, plaintive sound repeats itself again and again. I do not know who built those bells, nor why. The Kremlin walls date, I believe, from the thirteenth century and were built by Italians. Perhaps the clock also belongs to that great period of the Milanese and Florentine brick architecture. Yet those chimes seemed to me to express the tragedy of the whole millennium of Russian history, the ever-deepening cleavage between rulers and oppressed, the failure of each rising, the stamping out of each revolt, the stifled cries of despair that went up from the peasantry and workers, whether it were in the Bolotnikov rising of 1606, the rising of Stepan Razin, the rebellion of Pugachev in 1773 or the crushed revolution of 1905. The oscillations of "pure" Marxian history, the series of suppressed risings, each wave gathering itself into more threatening proportions, till, in bloody warfare, the workers' revolution is finally successful: these things are abstract. But the workers in the queue before Lenin's tomb are no abstract proletariat but Russian men and women, in cotton shirts with embroidered edges, with bobbed hair and sunburned arms and faces. Afterwards they will go to the cinema or to the Park of Rest

* I learn that the bell is a cracked one.

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to play chess, to dance or to sing. Thus Communism in Russia is most utterly Russian. It is exultant in its conquest of a thousand years of travail, of labour and slavery since the Boyars, of Scandinavian descent, piled up their towers in Kiev, since Peter whipped the people into a foreign garb, since Nicholas smirked and Kornilov drove his Cossacks into the hungry crowds. A thousand years of hopeless strife are expressed in the heaviness of those sighing chimes.

Beneath the Kremlin clock is St. Basil's church, with its twisted corkscrew spires, its fading colours that were once flamboyant in their lunacy. Just in front of the church, in the square, stands the round platform used by Ivan the Terrible for his public flayings and executions. I imagined a vast crowd of peasants in the square, a group of bejewelled priests upon the steps of St. Basil's, four torturers standing on the platform with bare chests and shaven heads, bending over a victim. Hideous screams went up to the Kremlin tower, blood moved stickily down the platform steps into the mud and cobbles of the square. The chimes beat out the hour, leisurely in their minor key, a movement gentle and resigned, like the silly gestures of the priests and the bowing of the peasants in their smocks, with folded arms. Always the people were punished and the powers remained.

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The slow procession of modern factory workers filed on into Lenin's tomb. They were to see the body of a man who had led them and their fathers to power, who had formed the Party directly out of the keenest elements of the working masses themselves. The Communist Party, the cream of the Russian workers, themselves at last took power and used it. They used it fiercely and logically for revenge, for consolidation and for reconstruction.

Thus, in Russia, the Communist perspective must be filled with the hardness of revenge, justified completely by the common feelings of man. It is felt that the blood of peasants and workers who had slaved for a thousand years was rightly atoned by the crushing of the dominant class, utterly and completely. The personal innocence of many members of the nobility and the bourgeoisie was unimportant. Only by the removal of the upper class as a whole could the 170 millions of the people be set free. All this, rightly or wrongly, the people feel. In 1937 it is as true as in 1917 that, in the words of Lenin, "the people are to the left of the Bolsheviks." By the "leftness" of the people is implied this element of vengeance against every vestige of the old authority and against the spirit of such authority expressed in the movement of Fascism in the world at large. All the slogans, from the

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original "All Power to the Soviets!" down to "Life is happier, Comrades, life is better!" express either the initial vengeance or its justification in deeds. Just as the revolution was a complete reversal of class relationships, so the moral philosophy of Soviet Communism feels itself to be a reversal of moral tendencies. There was idleness, conspicuous leisure and waste among the old nobility. Now the Party man must live simply, inconspicuously and without excesses of any kind. Life before was governed entirely by the principles of free contract. A man could buy and sell anything whatever, irrespective of the public good. Now life is governed by considerations of status. Each man belongs to a special grade (for the nonce) in the hierarchy of work and pay, and each grade must be maintained at not less than a prescribed level of material well-being. All actions conducive to the lowering of these standards are anti-social. Health, education and the nature of the goods sold in the shops are determined by social considerations. Freedom means, in essence, not the freedom of the individual to act independently of social criteria, but the freedom of society to impose its will upon the physical and traditional environments. The instruments of freedom are the instruments of scientific knowledge. Physical disease destroys the liberty of man to think and to act.

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Medical science and art, in their destruction of disease, liberate the powers of man. In the Soviet Union, therefore, the hospital doctors have absolute power to compel individuals to undergo operations and to take medicines. The vagaries of climate frustrate the liberty of man in his exploitation of the soil. Agricultural science, the drainage of swamps, the irrigation of deserts, the accumulation of stores of grain and the planting of new crops—all these activities are the sanctions, therefore, of freedom, and must be applied irrespective of the will of the non-scientific man. Man best utilises the fund of knowledge collectively. Therefore scientific freedom demands the suppression of the recalcitrant individual on the land, the "kulak." The spirit of man is chained by ignorance of scientific laws, and by a social structure and set of laws that impede the growth either of knowledge or its utilisation to the full. The liberation of man's spirit, therefore, is attained only in the maximum utilisation of knowledge.

In Russia, it is important to notice, this scientific philosophy of freedom emerges in actual history as a dialectic opposite to the tradition of the Russian past. Again, therefore, in distinction from the spirit of Communism as it may one day emerge in England and America, Soviet Communism is militant and vengeful

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in its feeling. In Europe and America the body of scientific knowledge grows with the continuous development of Aristotelian and synthetic thinking from the fourth century B.C. The spiritual change to Communism in these countries of the classical tradition, therefore, is less radical. The seeds of scientific liberalism, which must evolve as Communism eventually, have been sown already by Socrates, by Aristotle, by Galileo, by Darwin, by Marx and by Einstein. The conflict between "science" and "religion," a conflict practically without significance in the thousand years of Russian history, has been fought out in Western Europe and America, a continuous and gradual victory of science over the Oriental forces of non-scientific thought. In Russia the victory of science and the scientific conception of liberty have been carried on the wings of social hatred and revenge, and this leaven of acrimony may for ever mark off the Soviet spiritual realisation from the same victory elsewhere. The struggle in Europe and America may attain to armed proportions, but already the victory of science is implicit in the traditions of Western thought. It is ironical that the last stronghold of non-scientific thought (Fascism) should appear in Italy, a land of the liberal and classical tradition, whilst the victory of science over Oriental mysticism should appear in

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Russia, a land of theological mumbo-jumbo!* The world seems now to be gathering itself together for the final test of strength between the scientific and the non-scientific modes of thinking and feeling. Quite apart from the conflict between "capital" and "labour," out of which Fascism and Communism respectively arise, the conflict of non-science and science is revealed in the same struggle. For, in defending their class interests under Fascism, the middle classes have raised up a body of idealism radically distinct from the scientific approach to society. The matter hinges upon our approach to any social relationship whatever. The Fascist, whether consciously or unconsciously, regards human beings as having gathered themselves into distinct groups of purely defensive and offensive significance. A group ("race" is the usual Fascist term, a term rapidly losing all meaning for scientific ethnologists) exists in order to defend itself against the predatory attacks of other groups stronger than itself, and also the better to attack and subjugate other groups weaker than itself. The struggle for existence and the conception of military "fitness" are regarded as somehow divine, an Oriental and Nietzschean view of things utterly alien to the only constructive European tradition. If this account of the origin of society be

* Only the Marxist understanding of capital evolution can unravel this seeming paradox.

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taken, not merely as a matter of fact but as an ethical starting-point, then the implications are utterly in conflict with any rational sociology whatever. For the "good" society, on this basis, is merely the strong society. The ultimate goal of each society, therefore, must be the unlimited aggrandisement of its military power, which alone can secure survival in a world of conceptually hostile fragments. Quite simply, the Fascist says: "Let us face the facts. The nations are in conflict, and always have been. Therefore the nation that is consciously aware of this reality and adapts itself thereto, will emerge triumphant. It will fulfil itself according to the principles of nationhood implicit in the very nature of society." Science, therefore, for the Fascist, is instrumental, merely, to the attainment of national prestige. The great man is the great soldier. The great scientist, for the Fascist, is only a servant of the military power.

The utter irreconcilability of this kind of "realism" with the most elementary scientific philosophy is easily apparent. Whatever may have been the actual origins of society (and there were probably many different origins), it is easily demonstrable that social relationships may exist purely for the benefit of the participants. On this view, it is the mutual relations of the members of a group, rather than the relations of the group as a

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whole to other groups, that is the more important. If we suppose two individuals, A and B, possessing boots and apples respectively, it is obvious that the formation of a group, AB, on the basis of the exchange of boots for apples, may result in benefit for both A and B. This extremely simple possibility extends further. There is actually no limit to the number and complexity of social relationships out of which mutual benefits may arise. It is for this reason that a philosophy such as Fascism, which delimits the number of relationships artificially, by emphasising the "racial," national and other hindrances to social contacts, is the very essence of unscientific thought. Science is merely the growing body of knowledge. Such knowledge, at any time, may be employed in the creation of such kinds of social relationships as yield benefits and in the ruthless elimination of others not conducive to that end. Thus strife and force may be used, upon occasion, both in opposition to the potential benefit of man and in support of it. The coming struggle between Fascism and Communism, therefore, is the old conflict between science and non-science in a new form. Fascism uses force for national power, and for the material interests of the middle class. Communism uses force in resisting the opponents of science, of whom the Fascists are the modern type. Democracy in

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the capitalist state, the half-way house, is passively in favour of science, but Fascism, the final exaltation of unscientific thinking, is the universal enemy.

Soviet Russian Communism represents the highest and most explicit formulation of scientific values in the world to-day. Yet the historical conditions of the Russian phenomenon have demanded a local perspective that will differ, in its synthetic temper, from the achievements of the future in other lands. Economically, in the field of social institutions, it remains necessary in these other parts of the world to co-ordinate the means of production and the supply of savings by the ordinary Marxian process of the elimination of the private employer of wage labour. This process, in England, America and France, will amount merely, in the field of action, to an expression of the final conquest of nominalism by universalism, the new universalism of scientific values. It will mean the victory of the scientific conception of liberty over the oriental, mystical and personal. Whereas in Russia the triumph of science has been an aspect of catastrophic Leninist revolution, in Europe and America the values of science have been gathering historical momentum through the ages, the appearance of Marx himself being merely an illustration of this selfsame growth. Thus, in philosophy, as in

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technology, Marxism and scientific ethics have been well and truly conditioned in Europe already, and the break with the past will be in no sense so drastic as it was in Russia. The hardness, the gritty determinism of the Soviet historical perspective is conditioned by the history of Russia, by 1905 and by 1917-22, and it is for these reasons that the underlying continuity of the Soviet idea with that of Periclean Athens is obscured in the eyes of most people in the West. This continuity is only beginning to be felt, even in Russia (the modern desire for classical forms of architecture partly expresses it, as a young Russian painter with whom I travelled on a boat across the Black Sea explained to me), but the philosophical implications of man's doings are often independent of his feelings.

In this chapter I am not seeking to blur the distinction between post- and pre-Marxian scientific thought, for the sense in which the Marxist view of history definitely interposes a barrier in thinking, a barrier upon one side of which now stand the forces of passive immobility (Aldous Huxley and his "constructive Pacifism"), and upon the other those of powerful movement, is very real. I mean only that Plato would probably have understood and approved the New Soviet Constitution, in many ways not dissimilar to that of Cleisthenes, with its functional

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(Soviet) representation of the city, the land and the marine workers of the Piræus in the Athenian Constitution, and that, in the West, we are so subjectively stuffed with Protestant Orientalism as to be blind to the scientific element in the classical tradition of our own past. Indeed, we have far less with which to quarrel, as European Communists of the future, in our own past, than the Russians. They could conquer only with hate. We, on the other hand, require only to push the dregs of Protestant Nominalism, a Dead-Sea fruit in the scientific world, into the Atlantic Ocean (and to see that it drowns), and our true spirit will assert itself. "Freedom" will then be found, less in the preparation of Magna Cartas and other pieces of parchment than in the overcoming of scientific ignorance and the production of goods. The existence of an unco-ordinated, unplanned society, based upon the economics of scarcity, must for ever inhibit our advance. The Russians discovered this in hatred. We shall make the discovery through a more detached understanding of the implications of the Russian phenomenon and its relation to our own tradition.

CHAPTER V

REVOLUTION: BLOODY OR BLOODLESS

LET us now consider two modes by which the economic problem facing modern society tends to be liquidated. These two modes, and the conditions of their manifestation, are utterly confused in the mind of the public and by almost all of those who believe they are Communists. No attempt to weigh the significance of the modern Soviet Union can be adequate unless some attention is devoted to this matter.

In certain parts of the world, and Russia was one of them, the re-adaptation of the form and the mind of society to a new technical situation is preceded by a deepening poverty among the masses of the people. War, primitive, chaotic capitalism, the absence of any machinery of social insurance, a helplessness of the individual worker in face of the industrial processes of the division of labour—such are elements of the background of bloody revolution. Physical hunger, to the point of speedy death by starvation, when experienced by millions of people, neighbours at the

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bench and in the fields, stings the human organism into a new kind of attitude. People die in their holes, as people have been dying in Asturias in Northern Spain, since the bloody suppression of the miners' rising in October, 1934. Their rotting bodies stink or freeze, according to the season. Yet, so long as the sight of blood does not reach certain proportions, there can be no bloody revolution. Then, there is a wholesale attempt by a terrified government to crush militant anger among the people by force. Demonstrations are put down forcibly by the militia, the armed forces of the propertied class. Several hundred people are killed in the streets. Blood spurts and splashes on the crumbling walls of backward towns. It streams into the gutter, smelling unexpectedly sweet and causing nausea. There is the shatter and bang of rifles and machine-guns. Women shriek and howl. There is milky blood and slush on men's boots. Inside the live human body the adrenalin secretions work instantaneously. The heart thumps wildly and the fingers clutch convulsively. People run back to their holes. After a little while there is quiet. No more shooting. People meditate.

These are the circumstances of bloody revolution. Then it is that those who can speak, speak, fearless of the consequences. Men fear least when there is most to

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fear and least to lose but life itself. Only at moments like this do hungry people read fiery articles in newspapers. They do so when they have seen large numbers of their comrades shot. Life is then all dangerous, all hungry, and every day is the sight or the news of more blood. Then there is revolution. When workers are faced by the alternatives of continued hunger and submission and the strength that lies in vast numbers, there comes a day when they decide in favour of the latter. The decision is not sudden. It gathers itself together, like the will of a man who has been drugged. Even after the first movements in the revolution have begun, the revolutionary will still gathers slowly, and reaches its climax only after victory is assured.

Thus they are fighting now in Spain. Thus they fought in Russia in a struggle that lasted for three years against five invading armies of capitalism. In the end there can be victory only for the forces of survival, forces that will construct life anew, not merely by the reintroduction of order into chaos, for conservatism is always barren at such times, but by the raising of man's sufferings and his joys to a higher level. Man suffers for ever. The myth of "more happiness" is the dupe of parasites and the phraseology of the not too astute. The belief in "maximising" joys and "minimising" sorrows is the pathetic fallacy of the non-historical

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mind. For the sources of both misery and happiness are infinitely numerous, whatever the earthly environment of man. The true revolutionary, the true Communist, the scientific historian wants not "more happiness" but a better kind of happiness, a noble wretchedness. Anguish over money, bread and jobs is low. Anguish over the sweetness and bitterness of personal relationships is less low. Anguish over the personalised problems of science is higher. Anguish over the meaning of life itself is the highest wretchedness to which man can possibly attain. It is for this reason that a long period of attrition at the hands of a clever Conservative power welds a minority into revolutionary strength and vigour. It is for this reason that the long years in which Russia's leaders were banished to Siberia, and in which India's leaders are set to meditate in jail, gave, and will give, to their movements the gritty determination of ultimate victory. The same gradation is true with regard to happiness. Happiness with food is low . . . it is also good. Happiness with women is less low; it is better. Happiness with scientific discovery, or in the discovery of beauty, is great. Happiness in the fleeting vision of a great society is the greatest of all. But happiness is not to be measured by "more" or "less." Man's nerves, his flesh, bones and blood are less or more keen to the

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subtleties of change; that is all. Only the lib.-lab. Socialist, the flabby bourgeois, thinks of "man's best self" as a mildly benevolent force, operating in a world properly conditioned by rights and duties secured by a pretty constitution. This conception of "justice" as a measure of the condition of "maximum happiness" is the pathetic wish-dream of almost every misfit in the modern world, a dream utterly alien to the hard, steely vigour of Marx's vision. Marx was no Socialist, if Socialism means no more than the happiness promised by constitutional reformers. He believed in a greater life, but not necessarily in a happier one. I do not know if he ever referred to "divine discontent," but he certainly valued it as the psychological basis of all historical movement whatever, and in this he agrees with the mystical optimist, Professor Toynbee. He was a revolutionary, and revolutionaries, in the horrible scenes I have been describing, are driven by hatred, burning, desperate hatred of the conditions of a bestial life. Silly people vote for happiness at election times. They do not fight for it. Nobody ever does.

Men may be happier or less happy in the Soviet Union than they were in the Tsarist Empire. The sentimentalist who goes chasing happiness in the Soviet Union will, of course, be shown it. He will certainly be shown happiness also at Lord Nuffield's

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wonderful works at Oxford, or at Ford's works in Detroit. He can be shown it in a starving village in the Madras Presidency in India or in the frozen villages of the Arctic North, or in a New York slum, or in Manchukuo. Happiness, more of it, less of it, any amount of it, may be witnessed in any single part of the world you may care to mention. It is the quality, not the quantity of happiness and misery that is unknown to the Socialists of our municipal borough elections, our tawdry Co-operative Wholesale Society, with its thousands of middle-aged sentimental members, our glorious trade union leaders who travel in Russia in search of "Truth." Even the Communist Party, in Spain, in Russia, in Germany, in America, in France, in India and Brazil will waste the vigour and elasticity of its youth until it can attain to a final elimination of sentimental thinking about "happiness."

I come now to the second mode by which the economic problem of the modern community may be solved.

Various conditions, the persistent growth of technical progress, inflationary boom, intensive monopolisation, a subsidised and prosperous industry, such as armaments, combined with elaborate schemes of social insurance, may render actual physical death by

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starvation only of small proportions. Under these circumstances, which apply in England and America to-day, successful armed revolution is not possible. If we eliminate the strong probability of war, during which anything whatever may happen, it is not possible for the masses of people, with food in their bellies, to experience the necessary psychological conditions for bloody revolution. All attempts to cultivate such a mood, by means of speech and writing, are doomed to failure. Moreover, the cultivation of revolutionary fervour among the "Lumpen-proletariat," the few hundred thousands of the permanently unemployed, the misfits, the declassed intellectuals, can have only the disastrous effect of alienating the ordinary workers in employment. The ordinary workers are suspicious always of the declassed intellectual, the student writer, the permanently unemployed, the faded. Only when such ordinary workers and their comrades are actually starving, that is to say, actually dying rapidly of hunger, is it possible for the psychological seeds of insurrection to be sown in circumstances such as I have described above. Thus, in America, in England, in Germany and in France, barring war, real Communist revolution is not possible. In these countries riots and conspiracies may occur, but the absence of actual destitution on a nation-wide scale lends itself to

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the support of the conserving forces in society, even though such forces may be living under the disguise of Socialism. There may well be still a million members of the Communist Party in Germany. That is a substantial force. It can be used successfully, however, only in the event of defeat in war or some other wholesale disaster. In peace time, during the normal course of the class struggle, no amount of agitation on the part of the really depressed proletariat can elicit anything, in crisis, but an intensification of Conservative, i.e. Fascist rigour.

In these circumstances, then, how is the essential adjustment to collectivism to be made? Is mankind faced merely by a drearily implacable set of alternatives? If revolution can come only through misery, must we wait patiently for misery to arrive? Must we believe in the inevitability of a final crisis, in the mere working of the economic system, with its drive towards war? Must we really sit, knowing that our very prosperity is the sole condition of our stagnation, which will allow us to witness, in the coming years, the mounting achievements of the Soviet Union in every field of human endeavour, without making any radical attempt to put our prosperous but hideously wasteful system in order? Is this the inevitable destiny of our Western civilisation? Is this the logical converse

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of the Shakespearean proverb: "Sweet are the uses of adversity"? Does Professor Toynbee, the distinguished historian, invite us, simply, to wait patiently for a new "Challenge" to arouse in us the necessary response? Is the challenge of mere opportunity a challenge to which only wish-dreamers can ever hope, in vain, to awaken the spirit of man?

The answer to these questions, which are present in the minds of many thousands of people to-day, lies, I believe, only in the materialist analysis of capitalist society as it stands. Let us, therefore, consider the tendencies of capitalist evolution in the West. The following tendencies, whether they appear in wavelike movements or in the form of a continuous growth, are clear.

1. The growth of gigantic concerns in every field. This has the primary effect of transforming the "pure" competition of nineteenth-century economics into the "cut-throat" competition of to-day. Yet the mere existence of "cut-throat" competition elicits its own negation, the negation of competition itself. Profit-pooling schemes represent nothing else but the growth of monopoly. A group of apparently independent concerns, operating under a "gentlemen's agreement" with regard to output, prices and the

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sharing of work, is, in fact, the substitution of monopoly for competition. Indeed, so urgent is the need for such agreements that in certain industries where they fail to develop spontaneously, as in the British coal and steel industries, parliamentary legislation may be enacted actually to compel or induce competitors to come to agreements.*

2. The growth of monopoly inevitably gives rise to two contradictory tendencies. On the one hand, it is clear that a monopoly, in virtue of its control of supply, and therefore of price and of its own profit, is in the position to exploit, not merely its own workers but the consuming public as a whole. It exploits everybody, including other monopolies like itself, by endeavouring to maintain prices above the level to which they would otherwise fall under the "natural" laws of competition. These factors, in the political field, give rise to vigorous protestations, on the part of the mere consumer, with the result that monopoly comes to be recognised to be both the sole salvation of capitalism from the "chaos" of cut-throat competition, and a "menace" to civilised

* An excellent non-socialist descriptive account of these developments may be found in an American study of British conditions—A. F. Lucas, *Industrial Reconstruction and the Control of Competition*.—Longmans, London

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life. The people find themselves demanding both monopoly, because they see its inevitability, and its control by public authority. Each monopolist, in short, wants to curb the power of every other monopolist except himself, and every consumer cries out for a "fair deal." In other words, there is a demand for "controlled capitalism." The gigantic success of Mr. Roosevelt in America in the elections of November 1936 is a clear proof of these tendencies. It is also, though for other reasons as well, the cause of the existence of the National Government in England and of the political face of France. Feeling is expressed in England less in popular elections than in the actual administration of laws by an efficient civil service, in the forms of petty planning. The widespread discontent with the Milk Marketing Boards illustrates a tendency of the people to view with suspicion all attempts to favour producers in monopolistic schemes, as against the millions of poor consumers who are unable, in consequence, to buy cheap milk.

Thus we see before our eyes the process forecasted by Marx, the spontaneous evolution of the structure of capitalism in the direction of greater and greater concentrations of capital into the hands of larger and

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larger concerns. At the same time the numbers of independent employers are declining rapidly and the numbers of salary-earners and richer black-coated workers increasing correspondingly.* This process was described by Engels as the Socialisation of the economic process, the increasing need to work in co-ordinated groups, and must be radically distinguished from the final act of revolution, the seizure of the means of production by the democracy itself and the establishment of the Plan.†

Now this spontaneous process of Socialisation cannot, in itself, in theory, secure the final revolution. The final struggle, in which private ownership of real capital is abolished, can occur only at a moment when, to use the language of psycho-analysis, the Ego in social mentality shall have attained to a full recognition of the real relation between the Super-ego and the Id.‡ In ordinary language, this means simply that the final revolution cannot come until people come fully to realise their ability to change the world in accordance with the possibilities that lie before them. Until that moment arrives, the dominant class will continue to maintain itself in existence by means of all the traditional hypnotic instruments at its command,

* Colin Clark, *National Income and Outlay*, ch. 5.—Macmillan, 1937.

† F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, p. 318.—Lawrence & Wishart.

‡ R. Osborn, *Freud and Marx*.—Gollancz, 1937.

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namely, Kings, State Churches, Patriotic displays and ceremonies, Imperial Notions of Grandeur and Good Will, the American Constitution, and so forth. We have, therefore, two important questions to ask. Firstly, how can the consciousness of society, the workers, rise to the task of revolution when the long-run tendency is for the standard of living to rise? Secondly, why should the final revolution be any less bloody at a higher stage of capitalist evolution than at a lower, as in Russia or Spain?

The answer to the first question lies in the inevitable series of waves of rising and falling prosperity within the capitalist system. The explanation of these booms and depressions is a matter for economic science, and I can do no more than refer the reader who cares for very difficult study to two totally dissimilar textbooks, each of which analyses the process from a different angle, bourgeois and Communist respectively.* Each writer recognises the trade cycle as it exists, and I myself am inclined to the purely bourgeois or orthodox view of the technical causes of the cycle, though I accept the Communist understanding of the only possible political action that can ultimately be taken with regard to it. The important point, from our angle of approach, is that this endless cycle generates the

* F. A. Hayek, *Prices and Production*, 1936 edition.—P. S. King & Sons, London. John Strachey, *The Nature of Capitalist Crisis*.—Gollancz, 1935.

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vital revolutionary temper. In times of depression, misery and despair anger and embitter a vast section of the people. During the boom the majority of the workers are won back to allegiance to the existing order. But all are not won back, even though their standard of living may rise. Then, in the next inevitable depression, which must, for certain technical reasons, be more extensive than its predecessor, those who were formerly embittered are still further convinced of the futility of the system, and this second process of revolutionary agitation is vastly stimulated by the existence of a larger body of talkers, writers and propagandists. Since the duration of each cycle is not more than a few years, the memory of the last depression is not forgotten by many, and the prospects of the ensuing boom are less encouraging. This sequence is assured by the necessity that each depression shall be worse than its predecessor and must require more drastic measures for its cure.

Then again, the markets for the various national capitalisms are very unevenly divided. Thus, in every depression, the rivalry of economic nationalism must become more and more endangering to peace between the "haves" and the "have-nots." The armaments race and the drive to war are inevitable consequences of the system of class relationships under national capitalism,

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and the gathering revolutionary temper thus feeds not only upon its apprehension of the technical defects of the capitalist system within each territory, but of the approaching catastrophe of meaningless war. It comes to be aware that every dominant class is faced with an inescapable dilemma of its own helpless making. If the armaments boom stops, millions will be thrown out of work again and profits (in money terms) will fall. But unless the armaments race is stopped, there must be war. There is seen to be no escape from this dilemma. Revolutionary anger and the necessary will for revolutionary change are bred in the spirals of such futility.

If we suppose war, the technical revolutionary advantages, from the point of view of the socialisation of capitalism in its higher stages of development, may be swept away. For, in war, the standard of living may suddenly be reduced to the primitive level, upon which bloodshed may be enormous. On the other hand, if we imagine (though it is pitifully unlikely) that somehow or other international war on a grand scale is avoided, then the revolutionary temper may be generated peacefully along Popular Front lines, and the prospects may be very much better. Let us, therefore, make the improbable assumption that there will be no great European war for an indefinite period, and on this

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basis approach the problem of the bloodiness of revolution in an advanced non-Fascist community like England or the U.S.A.

In the first place, when almost everybody is earning a wage and a large section of the people own small shares of the means of production, whilst the standard of living of the workers in work is maintained at a comparatively high level by some subsidised booming industry, a part of the material transition to the classless society is already secured. It is possible that these circumstances may enable many more people to see the weaknesses in the structure of capitalism than would be possible in a less advanced community of rigid class differences. This line of development is already illustrated by the growth of such essentially middle-salary organisations as the Left Book Club, with its hundreds of study groups all over the country, groups of serious students, through whom Marxist ideas are becoming available by leaps and bounds. It is also illustrated by the moral stiffening, combined with a declining dilettantism, in the Left movement in all the universities and places of study. The rising secular swing of technical progress ensures a slowly rising standard of living, in the long run, in spite of the waste and futility of capitalism, and this reduces the class differences arising from different standards of

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living. This expresses itself partly in better standards of education among city dwellers, and it is significant that the Conservative Party relies more and more upon the worst educated vote of the rural constituencies. Indeed, the Conservative Party may be described as possessing a crafty, astute and cunning head, but feet of rural clay; whilst, as yet, the Labour Party possesses the old Fabian woolliness of head, but the driving, powerful body and feet of the younger generation in the towns, with their higher level of educational attainments. These are the most hopeful auguries for peaceful revolution. It is once again significant that the workers are transferring their allegiance from their older, woollier trade union leaders, whose moral collapse at the offer of bribes by the Conservatives in the forms of social position and titled rank, has aroused a storm of disgust, to the tougher, more disciplined leadership of youth in the new trades of the South, and to the unofficial leadership of the Communist Party in Wales and Scotland. This trend is quite unmistakable. It is proved by the resolutions of local labour parties and trade union branches that are passed every month for the United Front, and by the fact that so many strikes are now unofficial, against the leadership of Trade Union headquarters.

Such broad, general movements, affecting every

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section of society, from the new generation of young intellectuals, tougher and more self-disciplined than ten years ago, to the least organised new trades in the Thames Valley, are inconceivable in backward countries like the old Russia or modern Spain, in which the dictatorship of the proletariat faces a structurally distinct class enemy, which, as such, must be crushed in blood before Socialism can be won. As I pointed out in the last chapter, the potential enemy classes still remain in the advanced countries, but they remain as symbols of the past rather than as exclusive functioning parts of society. The public schoolboy of to-day enjoys privileges, it is true, but to some extent he must work and compete with members of lower classes in order to survive at all, and his ideology rests, less upon fact than upon the memory of a dying epoch of absolute class rule. He must be watched, but some of his number have already been won for the revolution. In Russia such a thing was rare indeed.

Thus, the dictatorship of the proletariat following revolution in highly-advanced capitalism may well find itself faced with a very easily crushable enemy. This means that a peaceful, or very nearly peaceful revolution is theoretically possible. Then again, and this is of greater importance, whether the struggle be bloody or non-bloody, the period of duration of the

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tangible dictatorship varies directly with the degree to which the spontaneous Socialisation of economic life had previously developed under capitalism. That is to say, the proletariat must dictate, and go on dictating, until the standard of living shall have risen to such a level as to provide a basis of freedom in the field of thought-action that will no longer merit the description of dictatorship. In other words, the more food is available, the less is the need for rationing, and what applies to food applies also to every other material condition of satisfaction. The elimination of scarcity can never be absolutely attained, for the economic basis of necessity, the need to work and the unlimited horizon of wants, are permanent ratios, but there can be no questions of the direction in which it is possible to move. Communism, the realisation of the conditions: "From each according to his power: to each according to his need," is the limit of the dictatorship, which proceeds endlessly in the direction of its real fulfilment.

CHAPTER VI

ETHICS IN HISTORY

THE above discussion was sociological. We were concerned only with some of the social conditions of bloody revolutions, and we reached the conclusion that America and England do not at the moment exhibit these conditions. The revolutionary situation, hitherto, has arisen when distinct stages of social development, say, late capitalism and feudal medievalism, are brought suddenly face to face, or when the spark to ignite the flames of incompatibility between such phases is introduced by enforced partisanship in war. America, on the other hand, is an entirely capitalist country. Pre-capitalist elements in America were swamped utterly by the tides of immigration and by the advance of capitalism in a terrain of unlimited opportunity. The stages of capitalist evolution, since the Civil War, have followed one another in a manner almost of text-book orthodoxy in America, a vast capitalist power-house, insulated from the other historical currents of the world by

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conditions of historical time and oceanic space. For these reasons the generative effect of cultural conflict can arise only within the class structure of American capitalism itself. Capitalism, in America, has not to battle with any pre-capitalist forces in its vitals (such, for instance, as the "nobility" element in England or the "holy-holy" blackness of Spanish Jesuitry), such forces having been crushed long ago. Similarly, the isolated geography of America makes it very unlikely that any great war will drive the development of her capitalist structure forward to any higher stages than will otherwise evolve under normal conditions. Thus the seeds of fundamental change are carried purely in the womb of American capitalism. Daily we see the Marxian stages of evolution appearing, the concentration of capital proceeding despite the futility of anti-trust legislation, whilst the gradual elimination of the small competing employer causes a corresponding concentration in the ranks of labour. In no other way can we explain the appearance of John Lewis's gigantic trade union movement, which clearly contradicts the so-called individualism of the American people, or the conflict between the supreme court (a superstructure remaining from an earlier phase of capitalist development, when a multitude of scattered small capitalist concerns required a mentality of local "freedom") and

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the new needs of giant capitalist concentration. These facts are clear indications that the "character" of a people, its historical perspective, as we have called it, is not some external influence, but merely a reflection of the material needs of an age. It must not be denied that these "character" factors do partly condition the future, but they condition only the *way* in which the future shall be ushered in, and not the important formation of class structure, nor the basic mode of production. These latter are the final conditions of the new "character" of a people. Thus, in America the gathering concentration of the forces of capital and labour will make it essential for the American dominant class to maintain its powers with new weapons, which may conceivably take on a Fascist form. (It is easy to imagine the success of a powerfully financed slogan such as: "America for the Americans! Down with the New York Yids!") But, in any case, unless the American workers are reduced in the next depression to the starvation level, they will not fight a winning battle, nor conduct a successful bloody revolution against the enormous power of their absolute masters, the bourgeoisie.

Yet, the probability that the American workers will be unwilling to fight a revolution to gain power may, correspondingly, enable the dominant class to maintain

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itself by means of the machinery of democracy. These speculations only reveal the incompleteness of Marxism. On the other hand, no scientific categories of any kind can predict the actual course of history, and the incompleteness of all other modes of interpretation is even more manifest. Marxism enables us to see the class setting and the mode of material evolution of capitalism itself. Within this setting and this mode of evolution, American society must evolve, and the degree of bloodshed that will mark the inevitable revolution will depend upon the degree of misery into which the American people will be plunged in the final crisis of capitalism. More than that our knowledge of Marxism makes it impossible to predict.

In England, the stages of development of the modes of production, with their corresponding superstructure of utopias and ideologies, their historical perspectives, as we have called them, have evolved not without bloodshed, a long civil war, many peasant revolts and a thousand strikes, but never, on account of a series of accidents including the discovery of America and the steam engine, has the standard of living been reduced so low as to create the conditions of a major revolution. Yet England, on account of the precarious nature of her dependence upon markets protected by the ingenious devices of imperialism, by the tenuous

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strength of a constitutional monarchy and the ability to resist blockade in time of imperialist war, lives always on the brink of disaster. Six months of blockade of her merchant fleet might create the conditions of bloody revolution in England, especially when the revolutionaries, like the Russian Bolsheviks in 1917, would be in a position to suggest immediate peace with the enemy, thus securing food once more to the population. Yet, on account of the technical development of capitalism in England, which secures to the population the second highest standard of living in the world, *bloody* revolution, in the absence of war, is not possible.

Thus America and England, left in peace, will evolve to the final stages of capitalist evolution and Communism in America has a far more straightforward path before it than in England. Backing on international neutrality, the American Left is free to devote its entire strength to the preparation of the American mind for the economic and intellectual consequences of peaceful expropriation, a peaceful revolution that will probably not occur until capitalism, by its own internal development, shall have reached the stage of self-negation, monopolistic Socialisation.

In England the task is doubly difficult; the dangers doubly grave. Communists in England must address

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themselves, firstly, to a population that is conditioned neither historically nor dietetically for revolution. The Left must therefore dwell extensively upon the peaceful potentialities of the final re-adaptation, a peaceful change that may well take place in the absence of war. Yet, at the back of the mind of every English Communist must remain a sense of the ever-impending catastrophe. There is no need for us, after the manner of Fascists, to accept the necessity of war as the basis of salvation. We may be saved without war. At short notice, however, a matter only of a few weeks, the food supply of England may be reduced to the wholesale starvation level. At such a moment, which may at any time fall upon us, it will be needful for the Communist to display such powers of leadership as alone will win. Desperate, hungry workers will then have to be led against the machine-guns of the ruling class. Fascism will rear its head and will have to be crushed, physically and with blood. The penalty of failure in that struggle will be a régime of military dictatorship as alien to the various historical perspectives of English life as the dictatorship of the proletariat, its only alternative. Yet these alternatives may become realities in England, and the Left will have no important history before it unless it can face these issues. As yet these issues are faced only by the dominant class, in

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whose mind the eventuality of war, with its generation of the revolutionary temper among the undernourished masses, is clear. The anti-sedition legislation of recent years points clearly to this understanding. It would seem at the moment that the need of the Left both to prepare itself for peaceful revolution and to maintain the wilfulness adequate to possible barricades will not be met. Peace in Europe will allow the development of Communism in England to proceed along democratic lines. War may reveal the English Left, in its present shape, as incompetent to lead the masses, and a period of oligarchic Fascism may well ensue.

In the light of these considerations, we may return to the Soviet Union. What may we learn from Russia and from the social and historical possibilities of our age about our "ideals," in the vulgar sense of our ethical values, goodness, beauty and so on? Does the relativistic view put forward in this book exclude all such absolute values whatsoever?

These questions should be faced by all who go to the Soviet Union and by anybody who attempts to write a book about it. All views save those of nihilism and of impotent detachment from the passionate element in historical development, contain a kernel of timeless value. Certain conceptions of good conduct assume the proportions of categorical imperatives in the minds

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of most visitors to the Soviet Union and, indeed, of most people who have not soaked themselves in the limpid nihilism of post-war fiction.

Marx and Engels, writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, were able to dispose of the problems of absolutist ethics with comparative ease. I do not think that we of the twentieth century can dismiss these problems so easily. The news of bloodshed comes to us daily over the wireless. A whole generation of us can remember the events of 1914-22. Some of us are fighting now in Spain. To-morrow, perhaps, it will be Mexico or Greece. The immediacy of moral and emotional problems, involving always "categorical imperatives" of a sort, demands that we reconsider the basis of ethical relativity once more.

In his book *Ludwig Feuerbach*, Engels settled these problems of ethics merely with a good-humoured chuckle. He criticises the false materialism of Feuerbach. He describes it as undialectical, that is to say, unrelated to the inner conflict of history. Materialism, for Feuerbach, amounts merely to a recognition of the physical causes of all mental phenomena. It is merely the sort of vague materialism that one expects from one's medical adviser. Such a materialism can offer no solution for the real ethical problems we have to face in the day-to-day business of

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political history. Therefore, in matters of moral judgment, Feuerbach must needs turn once again to a code of ethics derived from a basically non-materialistic standpoint. Engels describes this standpoint as follows. It will be recognised as no more truly materialist than the sorts of liberal and nominalist perspectives I described in an earlier chapter.

*"The urge towards happiness is innate in man, and must therefore form the basis of all morals. But the urge towards happiness is subject to a double correction. First, by the natural consequences of our actions: after the debauch come the 'blues,' and habitual excess is followed by illness. Secondly, by its social consequences: if we do not respect the similar urge of other people towards happiness they will defend themselves, and so interfere with our own urge towards happiness.

"Consequently, in order to satisfy our urge, we must be in a position to appreciate rightly the results of our conduct and must likewise allow others an equal right to seek happiness. Rational self-restraint with regard to ourselves and love—again and again love!—in our intercourse with others—these are the basic laws of Feuerbach's morality; from them all others are derived."

Ludwig Feuerbach.—Lawrence & Wishart.

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This absolute, unchanging set of values is typical of all liberal ethics and false materialism and idealistic thinking generally. Yet, in a sense, it is the foundation of almost any set of social values at all. Engels recognises this. He is rightly concerned, however, to point out the distinction between idealism, in the philosophical and quasi-religious sense of transcendentalism, and that vulgar idealism which conceives of materialism as nothing more than moral viciousness.

"By the word materialism the philistine understands gluttony, drunkenness, lust of the eye, lust of the flesh, arrogance, cupidity, avarice, miserliness, profit-hunting and stock-exchange swindling—in short, all the filthy vices in which he himself indulges in private. By the word idealism he understands the belief in virtue, universal philanthropy and in a general way a 'better world,' of which he boasts before others, but in which he himself at the utmost believes only so long as he is going through the depression of bankruptcy consequent upon his customary 'materialist' excesses. It is then that he sings his favourite song, 'What is man?—Half beast! Half angel!'"

Engels is able to dismiss this philistine conception of materialism and idealism as follows:

"In the second place, we cannot get away from the

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fact that everything that sets men acting must find its way through their brains—even eating and drinking, which begin as a consequence of the sensation of hunger or thirst transmitted through the brain, and ends as a result of the sensation of satisfaction likewise transmitted through the brain. The influences of the external world upon man express themselves in his brain, are reflected therein as feelings, thoughts, instincts, volitions—in short, as ‘ideal tendencies,’ and in this form become ‘ideal powers.’ If, then, a man is converted into an idealist because he ‘follows ideal tendencies’ and admits that ‘ideal powers’ have an influence over him—then every person who is at all normally developed is a born idealist, and how, in that case, can there be any materialists?”

Now this argument is simple enough and few will disagree with it. On the other hand, the modern man who endeavours to employ it in discussions with many people living in the years 1936-7 finds it ineffective.

It seems that, in virtue merely of the “idealist” tendencies of all human beings whatever, certain fundamental ethical problems, such as that of the moral relation of means to ends and of the use of force in political life, are regarded, even by Communists, at any moment of time, as though they were really absolute, timeless and truly idealist problems. Indeed, there is an

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important sense in which the Communist attitude of relativity, according to which the relation of means to ends rests upon circumstances of time and place, is, in itself, a timeless and absolute attitude. It carries with it the view that the solution of social problems, the re-adaptation of society to a new objective situation, is the basic end or motive. The methods to be employed in the realisation of this end vary according to their chances of success at various times and places. The element of ethical relativity lies in the fact that it is the successful outcome of the struggle rather than the means required for its attainment that is the more important. This has the effect upon ordinary minds in capitalist countries of branding the Communist, and indeed the entire *Weltanschauung* of the Soviet Union, as cynical and opportunist. Indeed, the very conception of a class struggle, or of any struggle at all, contains opportunistic moral implications, whether the sociological analysis of the Communist be true or false. It is for this reason that the truth or falsity of the Marxist position is regarded, subconsciously, by most people in the capitalist world as of far less importance than its moral implications. A view which regards it as sometimes necessary to shoot large numbers of human beings, merely on account of the "class" to which they belong, whilst at other times prescribes an attitude of

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horror to Fascist brutality, together with a peaceful policy of collaboration with lamb-like affairs like the League of Nations Union, the Society of Friends and the Church of England, is morally shocking to many. To this it is no reply to say that ordinary, peace-loving persons (members of the Church) who are wont to express horror at Communist "cynicism" are themselves capable of Sahib-like ferocity when occasion demands. It is no reply to say that riots, general strikes, colonial revolts, mutinies, and so on, are "put down" with exemplary savagery in every capitalist community whenever they occur for no better reason than that they interfere with private property rights. For the ordinary person in capitalist society, who still lives under the influence, if not of religious at any rate of idealist philosophical doctrine, will always retort to such arguments that, if it be true that he is sometimes provoked to use force, to employ evil means in the service of "reasonable" ends, that is merely because there is, unfortunately, no alternative to such activity. The fact that there is no alternative is lamented as a tragic paradox, evidence of the nature of divine punishment since the fall of man. Since the predicament of Adam, such has been the nature of things. Our clear and moral duty is to continue to exalt the latent goodness in man and to eschew evil, as far as we,

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poor souls, can see our way to do with spiritual guidance. And so on. Mr. Aldous Huxley now seems to spend his time arguing along these lines. He draws our attention to the paradox whereby, in order for man in society to crush evil beneath his heel, it is necessary for him, at certain times, to generate in his own heart all the hatred, all the brutalism, all the abominable evil which he deprecates in his opponent. In face of this paradox mere man, normally horrified at the cynical opportunism of the Communists, is bowed down in humility. His only course is to have patience, to act with charity and to "have" a big policy of popular education, or possibly psycho-analysis.

In view of all that has been said in this book, how are we to make any reply to the seemingly unanswerable logic of this attitude? The reply that would be offered by responsible thinkers in Soviet Russia would, I believe, be much along the following lines.

It is true that every human being, as part of his psycho-physical constitution, contains absolute tendencies towards goodness. He deprecates all evil, whether evil be considered as final or instrumental to the attainment of a good end. These good tendencies, however, are liberated or held in leash according to the degree of freedom allowed by the mode of production and its corresponding social structure in existence at

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any moment of time. Therefore, in order to liberate the propensities to good actions in the nature of mankind, it is first necessary to utilise a social policy capable of transforming successfully the economic and sociological basis of society. The essence of such a policy is that it should succeed in this aim. Whatever the absolute relation between means and ends, a political attitude that is unlikely to succeed in changing the foundations of society will be correspondingly unlikely to eradicate evil from the motivations of men. Therefore, having regard to the condition of society at the moment, a policy of rigid and steely opportunism alone can possibly succeed in so changing our society as to establish the primary conditions of true ethical action. To hope for a comfortable occasion when it may be possible to combine goodness with expediency without damage to our ethical predilections is to submit to the prayerful doping of religion and idealism. It is also to run away. Policy, therefore, for the Communist, must be successful. Thought and action together prove the ethical content of politics. The so-called "good" Socialist, who lets his enemies slip through his fingers for humanitarian reasons, is trying to eat the cake of his desired society before he has got it. This is foolish, and every sensible Tory learns it in his father's business.

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Thus, in practice, which is the supreme test, not only of scientific but also of ethical theory, Communism shifts its tactics from time to time, according to the prospects of success. Idealist politics, on the other hand, continue to adhere to fixed attitudes, whether those of liberal democracy, constitutional monarchy, authoritarian "law and order," and so on, without deliberate regard to the state of affairs from moment to moment.

The solution of the problem of ethics, therefore, lies in practice. Good notions, wishes and intentions are futile in themselves. They must be adjusted "cynically" and cold-bloodedly to the conditions of time and place.

CHAPTER VII

THE NEW RUSSIAN: PRODUCTIVITY

THE changes in the forms of class domination that have characterised the past history of human society have invariably lacked the peculiar element of self-consciousness that is the distinguishing feature of the Communist revolution in Russia. The dominant classes of the past have arrived at power in order to operate a new process of production, to subjugate the masses of the working community after a new fashion. This, invariably, is the historical rôle of dominant classes, the rôle they actually perform, in fact. Yet it is important to bear in mind that new rulers are not conscious of this historical rôle, which is partially grasped only by cynics and humorists of the "Vicar of Bray" order. Voltaire, of course, grasped it, and so did Rousseau, but the remedy of the former was merely a sad and cynical recommendation to simple man to dissociate himself from politics and to turn solely to the cultivation of his own little garden, whilst the latter demanded that men should leap out of their

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historical skins into a realm of "free contract." Plato, even, is not without a vein of cynicism. In the *Republic*, after describing the ideal constitution and the man of true understanding, he laments that these things are confined to the region of speculation and are not to be found "anywhere on earth." The dialogue of the *Republic* runs as follows:

*"Well, said I, perhaps in heaven there is laid up a pattern of it" (i.e. the ideal constitution) "for him who wishes to behold it, and beholding, to organise himself accordingly. And the question of its present or future existence is unimportant. For in any case he will adopt the practices of such a city to the exclusion of every other."

"Probably he will, he replied."

Note the whimsically cynical "probably."

This cynicism is explained by Marxism as being perhaps the only possible attitude for the intelligent thinker who regards the evil of the world as springing, as it were, out of itself, or out of Providence, or out of something regrettable in the nature of man.

Thus, the class movements of past history, together with their religious and ethical systems, their great enthusiasms and their noble constructiveness (the great Gothic cathedrals, the pyramids of fifth-dynasty

* *Plato's Republic*, Davies & Vaughan translation.—Macmillan.

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Egypt, the mysterious sun temples of Peru, masses of exquisitely fitted stone upon the tops of rugged mountains), although in fact reflecting material processes of production and specific modes of economic subordination and domination, are not accompanied by consciousness of the fact. There is a divorce between theory and practice, between philosophy and economics, a divorce without scientific foundation and invariably involving a mystical state of mind. Fascism, the most dangerous form of economic class domination to-day, is not only not an exception to the general rule, but, in view of the fact that it arises only as an armed gesture against Marxism itself, is its most explicit illustration. In the real world of fact, by maintaining the crumbling structure of capitalism by sheer force, and by the suppression of every kind of anti-capitalist view, Fascism maintains the very basis of class division upon which it rests. Yet, in its own theory, its own self-justification, it makes no justification for its Conservative attitude towards capitalism but foists upon its supporters a series of mystical enthusiasms totally unconnected, in consciousness, with its own class foundations. Appeals to vague and distorted "tradition," to "race purity," to a vaguely military solidarity, to "the whole," to "spiritual leadership," to the virtues of "noble beasts," and so

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on and so forth, are its only intellectual content. All this philosophical bunkum, in a world supposed to be upon the threshold of science, is a perfect example of self-blinding to the realities of the social conflict within which history unfolds itself. The following is an example of the sort of metaphysical gibberish that emanates from modern "scientific" Italy:

"Fascism is a religious conception, in which man is regarded in his immanent relation with a superior law, with an objective Will which transcends the particular individual and raises him to be a member conscious of a spiritual society. Whoever sees only considerations of mere expedience in the religious policy of the Fascist régime has not understood that Fascism, beyond being a system of government, is also and above all a system of thought."*

This sort of thing may be a system of thought, but it is also entirely without meaning. It awakens in the reader only a diffused and muddled set of feelings. Mussolini wrote it in the *Encyclopædia Italiana* in an article on the doctrine of Fascism. I cannot refrain from the temptation to quote another morsel from the same impeccable source:

"The Fascist man is an individual who is at once Nation and Country, the moral law which binds

* Quoted *Mussolini's Italy*, by Herman Finer Gollancz.

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together individuals and generations in a tradition and a mission which suppresses the instinct of a life closed inside the brief cycle of pleasures, and establishes in duty a life superior to and free of the limits of time and space; a life in which the individual, by means of the abnegation of himself, the sacrifice of his particular interests, even by his death, realises that entirely spiritual existence in which resides his value as a man."

Let us leave Fascism floating about in an atmosphere "free of the limits of time and space," and return to the practical realism of the Soviet Union. We have only to bear in mind that Fascism, in its essential job of changing human nature, can move only along mystical, quasi-oriental lines. Fortunately, by failing to solve the menacing economic problems out of which Fascism itself has arisen, by failing to train human beings to the requisite intellectual attitudes for the solving of these problems, Fascism must ultimately crash upon the rocks of its own real and practical dilemmas, dilemmas in no way to be avoided by soporific wanderings into realms "beyond time and space."

Marxism in the Soviet Union proceeds to the task of changing human nature along entirely different lines, having no historical counterpart, in this respect, whatever. The present "dictatorship of the

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proletariat" is based upon the recognition, for the first time in history, of the class connections between economics and politics. This recognition has enabled mankind, in Russia, to govern its affairs, not in virtue of a *mere* philosophy, a mere "ideal," conceived as somehow independent of the economic relationships of society, but under the ægis of the recognition of the inseparable unity of political ideas and economic facts. Classes cannot be abolished by giving people equal pay, any more than by persuading them that they are all brothers and sisters in a spiritual whole of beautiful tradition. They can only be abolished by removing their economic bases, the modes of human relationship under which various processes of production are carried on. Under capitalism, the basis of class conflict is not the mere fact of pecuniary inequality, but the facts of conflicting interests in the institutional framework of society. Exploitation means, historically, the existence of a class of persons possessing controlling power over the labour and the purposes of the mass of the people. Slave and master, serf and lord, worker and capitalist are divided, historically, into materially irreconcilable classes, not because masters, lords and capitalists are rich whilst the rest are poor, (though an increase in poverty is accompanied by discontent), but because society is divided into a

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dominant and a subordinate class, ranged about a specific mode of production. The remedy, therefore, lies not in the mere extension of the franchise, nor in any magnanimous gestures by the dominant classes, but in the bodily removal of all modes of production involving a structural cleavage between classes altogether. This necessity has not been grasped by pre-Marxism thinkers, whose Socialism rests entirely upon the wishes and hopes of reformist legislation. It is true that in the past, each substitution of a new system for an old has involved liberating ideas, but ideas only. Slavery gave place, in Europe, to feudal serfdom, under the spell of something called "brotherhood in Christ," a very excellent notion, but nothing more. Feudalism was replaced by capitalism under the purely mental intoxication of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity," again a very good idea. In none of these evolutions are there any economic changes that could possibly eradicate the essential class relations of society. For, it may well be said that it is not only the poor who are "always with us," but the reasons for their poverty. In the view of Marx the reason for poverty was that society had become able to produce more wealth than was needed for bare survival. The surplus, in each phase, is necessarily appropriated by a dominant class through specific sets of machinery,

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namely, slavery, feudalism and capitalism. By a complicated process of historical evolution it so happens that science, the cumulative increase in the body of knowledge, has rendered the latest phase of class domination, namely capitalism, out of date. It neither operates of itself, neither can it be submitted to any workable plan. It must therefore be abolished, and with it the existing basis of class relations. This is what is described by persons who know no Marx as "Marxist dogma."

It should be clear that a notion like Marxism has historical implications quite unlike any of the idealisms of the past. A society that has set itself to abolish, not merely the superficial idea of class, but its economic roots, will have a history as fascinating as it is unpredictable. In the past such a phenomenon was not physically possible, on account of the comparatively static nature of the body of scientific knowledge, which rendered it virtually necessary for the bulk of humanity to live always on the verge of material destitution. This fact accounts for the essentially class nature of all historical struggle in the past, for "bread and butter" was always by far the most important subject to quarrel about. Classless history, in the sense that people will struggle, in a future Communist world, not about "bread and butter," as heretofore,

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but about heaven knows what, is at present almost unimaginable. Yet this, in all its dogmatic purity, is the direction in which the Soviet Union is moving at a pace that is fatally unappreciated in the crumbling world of capitalism, where the class struggle, denied by its fiercest participants on the right, is all-important. It should be remembered that Marx did not preach class war. He merely pointed to its existence and to its historical implications. Classes cannot be wished away by idealisms, by religious hopings, by "constructive pacifisms," by "appeals to reason" or by letters to *The Times*. They can only be put away by deeds. Since, however, at any given moment, only classes of human beings exist, and since one class depends for its social position upon the maintenance of the system, whilst the other derives small benefit from it, then it is the latter that must shoulder the task of the future. The capitalist class, by its very nature, is intent only upon the maintenance of capitalism. Fascism, therefore, in face of a threat from below, is the only kind of real enthusiasm of which capitalists are politically capable. Yet, until there is such a threat, there is no need for Fascism, just as there is no need to walk about with a heavy revolver unless there are thieves in the immediate neighbourhood. The working people, therefore, said Marx in the nineteenth century, are the only

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class, the class with nothing to lose but their chains (capitalists have not only their lives but their capital to lose), capable of removing the framework of capitalism. If the working class cannot take the living body of capitalism from its masters and transform it for the scientific needs of society, then they must first paralyse that body itself. They must lay long siege to the fortress of capitalism, reducing its defenders to submission by peaceful strikes. In this country, for complicated historical reasons that are dealt with in another chapter, such a peaceful but deliberate policy may possibly be successful without bloodshed. In Russia, as we have seen, a very great deal of bloodshed, together with its historical implication of hate, was necessary.

In Russia the proletariat have power. Its own leaders, the Communist Party, together with the sympathetic mass of the people, dictate for the express purpose of preparing the economic mechanism and the future generations of human beings for the logically unimaginable classless society. No such attempt has ever been made before. In accordance with the Marxist conception of the unity of politics and economics, the Council of Peoples' Commissars is also the "board of directors" of industry and agriculture. Elections are held on a Soviet or vocational basis. In

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England or America one elects a person who is supposed to "represent" one's district, and, almost invariably, the interests of the dominant class in that district. In the Soviet Union one elects somebody who works at one's own job and who also lives in one's district. One votes for or against a member of one's own trade union, or one's working group, and candidates are nominated only by workers' and peasants' organisations, the Party, the trade unions, the co-operatives, youth organisations and cultural societies. Money cannot buy any votes in Russia. Thus the democratic element in the Soviet electoral system is democratic in a basically Marxian sense, the sense in which one's political representation is also one's actual economic and class representation. A village, district or provincial Soviet Council, therefore, is a body of real representatives of the working masses as such. The elected councils themselves directly appoint the directors of industry, who receive fixed or fluctuating wages determined in exactly the same way as those of the masses of workers, skilled and unskilled, in the Union. Money gives no power to its owner over the working masses. The rich man, unlike any other kind of rich man in the world, cannot employ other people in order to increase his "capital" or "make a profit." No independent group may invest

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savings in order to "make a pile," which "pile," be it noted, must always derive from the fact of the labour of employees.

Thus, no independent employing class exists in Russia. Everyone is a worker directed by the state, which, in turn, is simply the board of directors of a self-operating system. Since all the profits and losses of industry pass through the budget of the country as a whole, the profits of some concerns are utilised to pay off the losses of others. The enormous profits of the Black Sea fleet of ships are used to finance low railway fares, and so on.

Under Fascism, in direct contrast to this state of affairs, the state is simply a heavily-armed club of profit-making employers. Fascist employers employ the population as a means of making profits in exactly the same way as in England or America.

It should be clear that in order to "run" Socialism, it is necessary to change human nature very considerably. In Russia it is precisely this changing of human nature, in work, education and leisure, which impresses itself with irresistible force upon the foreign spectator. Indeed, the "dictatorship of the proletariat" must devote itself to this task more assiduously than to any other. In order to do justice to the Soviet ideas upon the subject of changing

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human nature, however, it has been absolutely necessary for me to spend some time in explaining the Marxian conception of the aims of such changes. Capitalist notions of "progress" are necessarily as vague as the planlessness of capitalist economy itself. The existence of a plan postulates a correspondingly definite view of the ethical grounds of any economy whatever. Progress, in England or America, means a vague improvement in something called "material welfare." If people have more boots and shoes, more battleships, more ice-creams and more old school ties, it is called progress. More of everything except suffering is progress. In the Soviet Union progress also means precisely the increase in the quantity and quality of all possible means of satisfying wants, whatever those wants may be. The human being satisfies himself by means of the utilisation of things and notions. Satisfying things and satisfying notions are, therefore, the material stuffing of progress, whether in Soviet or capitalist economy. Let us call things and notions together objects. Progress, therefore, is the increase in the supply of such objects as satisfy wants. Freedom may also be described as the satisfaction of wants. Thus, just as the number and variety of wants are infinite, so also is the horizon of freedom, conceived in this sense. It is for this

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reason that control, planning and organisation are needed.

Thus, propaganda and education, in the Soviet Union, are devoted to the production of human beings who (a) see the relation of the growing body of scientific knowledge to a given idea of freedom, an idea compatible with science, and (b) recognise the need for personal submission to a plan. They must be prepared, not only to vote for specific objects of satisfaction but to submit to the organisation necessary for their materialisation.

Let us see what Marx himself has to say about freedom. It will be found that the Soviet conception of the proletarian dictatorship, with its corollary of what is called "democratic centralism," is a straightforward extension of Marx's ideas. Marx is writing, first, of the advantages of capitalism over the systems of production which preceded it. He says that capital extracts surplus wealth from the people in a way which makes for improvement in the material basis of life, and thus of freedom.*

"It is one of the civilising sides of capital that it enforces this surplus labour in a manner and under conditions which promote the development of the productive resources, of social conditions, and the

* Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. III, p. 953.—Charles Kerr & Co., New York.

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creation of the elements for a new and higher formation better than did the preceding forms of slavery, serfdom, etc. Thus it leads, on the one hand, to a stage in which the coercion and the monopolisation of the social development (including its material and intellectual advantages) by a portion of society at the expense of the other portion are eliminated; on the other hand, it creates the material requirements and the germ of conditions which make it possible to combine this surplus labour in a higher form of society with a greater reduction of the time devoted to material labour."

This passage on the superiority of capitalism over the previous economic stages of history leads Marx to a discussion of freedom.*

"In fact, the realm of freedom does not commence until the point is passed where labour under compulsion of necessity and of external utility is required. In the very nature of things it lies beyond the sphere of material production in the strict meaning of the term. Just as the savage must wrestle with nature, in order to satisfy his wants, in order to maintain his life and to reproduce it, so civilised man has to do it, and he must do it in all forms of society and under all possible modes of production. With his development the realm

* *Ibid.*, p. 954.

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of natural necessity expands, because his wants increase; but at the same time the forces of production increase, by which his wants are satisfied. The freedom in this field cannot consist of anything else but of the fact that socialised man, the associated producers, regulate their interchange with nature rationally, bring it under their common control, instead of being ruled by some blind power; that they accomplish their task with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most adequate to their human nature and most worthy of it. But it always remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human power, which is its own end, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can flourish only upon that realm of necessity as its basis. The shortening of the working day is its fundamental premise."

In the Soviet Union, after years of civil war, famine and disturbance in the endeavour to build Socialism in face of a hostile capitalist world, in a primitive rural environment, the scarcity of the means of production renders certain elements in the Marxian conception of freedom rather more important than others. It is here that we see the most important difference between Socialism in Russia and Socialism as it may appear in the more advanced capitalist West, where the technical apparatus of economic life, in the manner described

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above by Marx, is more developed. The elements to which I am referring are those of the recognition of necessity, which are the basis of the attainment of freedom. A given and limited structure of real means of production cannot be adapted easily, under any system, to the production of a vast range of goods. Therefore the available choice between the sorts of wants that are to be satisfied has, in Russia, been narrow. Therefore, of course, the need to submit to the organised production of certain goods without "changing one's mind" has been great. It is in this environment that certain practical principles of economy have been devised, and a definite form of propaganda been needful. These are the principles of "democratic centralism," which are concerned with the element of time in all economic and political matters. Thus, an interval of time must elapse between the making of a decision by the people (via the Soviet democratic machine) with regard to the satisfaction of a given want, and the setting in motion of social-economic machinery for the satisfaction of that want. In a community in which all resources are always in use, where there is no reserve of unutilised labour or capital or machinery, the state must be "given a chance to go through with it." When means of production are both scarce and all in use, they cannot

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be used to satisfy more than a given range of wants within a given period. In capitalist communities, the large permanent reserve of casual labour and unemployed money and machinery enables the range of wants to be satisfied to expand and contract according to demand or to the state of "business confidence." Thus, at Christmas time there is a big spurt in activity which is quite impossible in Russia, where everybody is always working to full capacity and every day of the year is a kind of "Christmas Day." Democratic centralism, therefore, is merely a political formulation of the Marxist theory of freedom, namely, the recognition of necessity. It means that wants must be expressed democratically by the workers, via the millions of Soviets, but must be satisfied dictatorially. Although people in the Soviet Union, therefore, have great freedom in deciding what *shall* be done, no one may attempt to agitate for reversals of policy once decisions have been taken. Once economic and social machinery has been started on the job of satisfying want A, people may not clamour for the stopping of such machinery and the setting up of other machinery for the satisfaction of some other want B. It should be strongly emphasised that the stress upon democratic centralism, the dictatorship so easily scorned by people who do not recognise its economic basis, is important

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in direct relation to the importance of necessity itself.* The greater the amount of material progress, the greater will be the freedom of people to change their minds from moment to moment. Indeed, the abolition of rationing at the beginning of 1935, the allowance of free markets for the sale of goods produced by workers themselves (i.e. without employing others for wages), and the Stakhanov principle of special rewards for efficient work, all are examples of retreat from the frontier of physical necessity owing to progress, in the ordinary material sense of the word.

Human nature is being changed in Russia by the introduction of a scientific ethics of freedom. People do not haggle over abstract ideals and the various metaphysical doctrines of liberty that are discussed in

* The principle of democratic centralism applies in a general way not merely to matters of economic planning. Thus, the most important rule for Communist Party members applies the principle to the decisions of the Party Central Executive Council. The Webbs write (*Soviet Communism: a New Civilisation*, p. 347):

"The Party member must unhesitatingly adhere to the 'General Line' in communist theory and soviet policy, as authoritatively laid down from time to time; and must be guilty neither of 'right deviation' nor 'left deviation.' There is, indeed, laid upon the Party member an obligation of union and loyalty far beyond that imposed on the non-Party masses. On new issues, and, in fact, in all matters not yet authoritatively decided on, there is, even for the Party member, complete freedom of thought and full liberty of discussion and controversy, private and public, which may continue, as in the series of Trotsky debates in 1925-1927, even for years. But once any issue is authoritatively decided by the Party, in the All Union Party Congress or its Central Committee, all argument and public criticism, as well as all opposition, must cease; and the Party decision must be loyally accepted and acted upon without obstruction or resistance, on pain of expulsion; and, if made necessary by action punishable by law, also of prosecution, deportation or exile."

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the universities of the West. The Marxist philosophy bridges the silly gap between theory and practice, ideal and direction. The ideal of freedom is gradually realised and unfolded in the increasing multiformity of economic life, for the reason that freedom, for the first time in history, has become, not a mystical watchword under the spell of which a new (prospectively permanent) ruling class is swung into power by a deluded people, but the mere recognition of the economic relativity of necessity. People in modern Russia do not discuss the "ultimate" rightness or wrongness of this or that action. They discuss, in actual political meetings in their factories, collective farms and trade unions, whether this or that is conducive to the satisfaction of a want should be postponed or not. The intensity of various wants is related, not to any permanent scheme of good and evil, but to the historical circumstances of time and place. Such a relativistic, pragmatic view is alone compatible with the constantly shifting basis of the satisfaction of wants that is to be attributed to the growing body of scientific knowledge. All wants are relatively good or relatively bad according to the shifting possibilities of satisfying them. Under capitalism there is endless "ideal" discussion of good and bad, considered in themselves, like disembodied spirits swimming in Mussolini's realm "beyond time

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and space." I myself spent a considerable part of my young life chattering in the seminar rooms of an English university of "political science" about "harmony," "the highest good," "rights," "duties," and so on and so forth, discussions which, in a world of relativity and the shifting body of knowledge, and therefore of wants, were utterly static and scholastic. In Russia people do not discuss these things, for the universities are not endowed by old gentlemen whose position in society renders confused thinking the *sine qua non* of their very existence. Soviet thinking, even the thought of the ordinary worker, the man one meets in the bus, the railway porter, the Red Army man, the collective farm secretary, is characterised by a straightforward, hard-hitting logic. In the English restaurant, the village, train or shop, such straightforwardness is scarcely in evidence. I was shocked by a cringing timidity, a shrinking handshake and an all too ready smile on the part of the plain Englishman on my return from the Soviet Union. People, especially people of the vast lower middle class, have so much to worry about, with their anxiety for their jobs, their difficulties in paying rent, amounting, on the average, to twenty per cent of the middle-class salary, taxes, hire-purchase payments and doctors' bills, that they could scarcely think with vigour, even if logical thinking

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were in any way encouraged. The Soviet newspapers are full of important information and political discussion. The American and English newspapers are packed with soul-destroying bunkum from beginning to end, for the sole reason that the destruction of souls is a highly paying and politically convenient business. In the Soviet Union man's mind is not cluttered by the advertising trickery of capitalist publicity. He sees slogans and propaganda everywhere, it is true, but he knows that the slogans are written by his thousands of fellow-workers at the bench. They express sheer revolutionary fervour, not the anxious craving of somebody to sell something to him. Life is certainly dirty and uncomfortable and fatiguing in Russia, but there is a hard-boiled straightforwardness about it which appeals strongly to me and to most people who, in our comfortable West, are impressed less with the cleverness than with the purposes of life.

It will be asked, is there not an element of naïve optimism in all this? You cannot force people to be logical, any more than you can be sure that the directors of Soviet industry have brains. The answer is that Marxism is optimistic throughout. It believes, and Soviet education inculcates into the receptive mind of youth, that any and every evil, except the necessity of labour, can and must be attacked by the

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collective ingenuity of man. That is what science is for. It teaches that there is no necessary losing on the swings what you gain on the roundabouts. That is to say, Soviet education eradicates utterly the pathetic attitude, with regard to misfortunes, of "God did it." The religious mind tends to view evil as "given." It leans to the view that any attempt to meddle with evil at one point must simply cause it to reappear at another. This oriental heritage from the Garden of Eden and the Fall of Man has been utterly stamped out among the young people of Russia. The child believes, quite simply, that every evil can be attributed to ultimately discoverable causes, that it may actually be crushed, like a serpent, beneath the heel of man. There are many serpents and many heels, but the growth of science ensures to man ever stronger boots. Soviet economy may, indeed, be described as a living grip upon the weapons of science in the eternal battle with nature. Communism is the "religion" of conquest, ever gaining in battle against every kind of evil in the world.

So much for the ideological background for the changing of human nature in Russia. It is a background of freedom, in a new sense, a sense not confined to impressive documents concerning suffrage and abstract rights, but a recognition of the material, as well as the

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ideal prerequisites of freedom. In order to be free, not only is it necessary for man to be entitled to vote and to talk, but for him to be sure of his job, to be sure of education, leisure, food, drink, holidays, pension, insurance against sickness and freedom to study. Freedom is based upon a recognition of what is necessary for its attainment, and of the temporal and spatial obstacles to its achievement. *Magna Cartas* are not enough.

We now pass on to significant phases in the transformation of human beings in Russia, with special reference to the "necessity" element in the Marxist conception of freedom. In the next chapter we pass on to the uses made of such freedom as has been attained.

Marx emphasised the productivity of the means of production as being essential to the attainment of freedom. The principal means of production, of course, is labour power itself, the physical and mental equipment of human beings. In connection with this, once more, we find a radical difference between Soviet Communism and its possible counterpart elsewhere. As we have seen in another chapter, Russia was a country of nobles, a small trading middle class and a vast army of unskilled and illiterate peasants. The attainment of full Socialism in 1928 (the beginning of the first Five-Year Plan) was accomplished by a

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population fitted for political, but not for industrial tasks, the very reversal of the situation in England or America. Industrial Socialism, in Russia, therefore, was a victory of unskilled enthusiasts and amateurs. It is for this reason that two phases may usefully be distinguished in the development of skill. The first, which covers the whole revolutionary period down to the end of 1934, may be called the period of Udar-nikism, or shock work. In the absence of skilled labour, industrialisation, if at all, could be accomplished only by means of enthusiasm, which was cultivated on an extensive scale. The Udarnik (he still exists in many fields) was a worker of keen political intelligence and enthusiasm. His function was that of "gingering up" his fellow-workers, of stimulating them to form groups of voluntary "Subotniki" (Saturday workers), in all sorts of jobs involving mass labour, such as street-laying and building underground railways. Quoting examples of this kind of thing, the Webbs write (*Soviet Communism: a New Civilisation?*):

"It rapidly became a regular practice among all sorts of workers, in offices and institutions as well as in industrial establishments. . . . The *Moscow Daily News* reported that a group of villages had organised Subotniki to construct the rough wooden furniture required for a school in which illiterates were being

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taught by voluntary teachers. An American lumber specialist writes that in an emergency in the woods, 120 men turned out and, by 'free work, did in four and a half hours what would ordinarily have taken those responsible for it eighty working days.' Whilst the huge tractor works at Kharkov were being constructed, mountains of rubbish accumulated all round the buildings; and the inhabitants of the city made it a point of honour to clear it away. . . . Whole crowds assembled on their free days, and swarmed round the premises, eventually completing the entire task. On some afternoons, it was reported, it looked like a big holiday excursion getting off the tramcars, and it is estimated that from first to last the participants numbered at least thirty thousand. At Leningrad, the correspondent of a French newspaper was impressed by the crowd of volunteers whom he saw helping to repave the streets. 'It was on the Ligovskaia in Leningrad, near the railway station, early in the summer, that I saw hundreds of men, women and children even, pulling the granite blocks up from the road. . . . Girls who seemed more accustomed to typewriters were doing their best to pull up the heavy setts which were then passed from hand to hand. Men dressed as office-workers lent a hand too. And children also were loaded with their own small

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burdens. . . . That spectacle, unforgettable by me, was one of the most moving spectacles I saw in the U.S.S.R., and I can vouch for it that there was no element of forced labour in all this. Only the noblest of enthusiasm spurred on these workers to partake in a task the rewards of which would accrue to them later.'

"The outstanding case of the use of voluntary labour during 1933-4 was that of Metrostroi, the construction of the Moscow underground railway . . . a herculean adventure, pursued without faltering in times of food scarcity and intense domestic overcrowding, as a matter of 'glory and heroism,' by the ardent 'builders of the Socialist state.' In addition to the tens of thousands of workers regularly employed in this great engineering construction, more than two hundred thousand men and women of all ages, Party members and non-Party alike, from practically all the factories and offices in Moscow, volunteered their services on various free days during nine months from January 23rd, 1933, in order that the first twelve-mile section could be opened on the seventeenth anniversary of the October Revolution."

All this, of course, turns my mind to the building of the new Waterloo Bridge in London! In London there are thousands of workers available for bridge-building, any amount of materials, and a potential

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keenness in the souls of men. Yet, I believe, it is going to take six years to put up a single bridge! The reason is not technical, but financial, to be attributed entirely to the difficulty of "raising money," with which we deal briefly in Appendix B.

There are not many Subotniki left now in Russia, for this particular phase has now been largely superseded. I was fortunate, however, in being able to watch a group of them at Batum, at the east end of the Black Sea. A few dozen young men, with picks and shovels, were clearing a fair-sized patch of land at the edge of the sea. They were making a swimming pool and sports ground. They called out cheerily to me "Subotniki," and were delighted when I understood what it was all about.

The great phase of Udarnikism, the phase of enthusiastic unskilled labour, largely with foreign experts, was described as the passing of revolutionary ardour from the stage of the struggle between man and man to a higher level, namely, the level of struggle with the bare physical environment of society. An element of sport entered into this stage. Out of the shock brigades of enthusiasts in industry, and the groups of Subotniki, developed Socialist competition. Different units in industry, shipping and agriculture would compete with one another, in the output of

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goods, the harvesting of crops in record time, the racing of ships to port, and so on, and the results of these competitions were broadcast all over the Union and the victors publicly fêted. This form of competition still continues intensively, though it has been raised to a higher technical level of skill. There are also many cost-accounting brigades, workers who concentrate upon the discovery of new methods of reducing costs and increasing efficiency in industry, a kind of "rationalisation," under the impetus, not of mere profits for distant, unknown shareholders, but in accordance with popularised versions of the Marxist conception of freedom. Workers' inventions and discoveries are rewarded on a fantastic scale, many workers who have discovered simple and efficient ways of doing purely manual tasks being among the richest people in modern Russia. Their photographs are circulated not only in the factory newspapers (every industrial concern, every collective farm has its own newspaper), but in *Pravda* and *Izvestia* themselves. I saw many photographs of this sort. Pictures of "Comrade Bubkov with his wife and small daughter walking in the Park of Rest in Moscow. It will be remembered that this comrade discovered how to hold a spanner in a new way at the Stalingrad tractor plant."

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Shock work and mass enthusiasm on the unskilled level, however, belong essentially to the earlier phase of unskilled Socialism. The elemental *naïveté* of such enthusiasm, which can only be likened to such events as the building of the cathedrals of the eleventh century by the city communes of Northern Europe (the hatred of witchcraft was about as intense as the modern Russian's hatred of what is called "sabotage," or tampering with "social property"), has, in the modern world, a purely Russian significance. Instead of the blind evolution of industrial equipment and technique that occupied the nineteenth century in Western Europe and America, we have a community deciding, self-consciously, to construct industries, as it were, overnight. The task had to be fulfilled with foreign skill and equipment and by sheer local enthusiasm. Russians discovered the technique of industry, not in trade schools but in the actual business of work, in the Plan itself. It is this fact that accounts for the unfinished, amateurish appearance of a great deal of the constructional work of the first Five-Year Plan. The great Molotov motor works at Gorki failed even to start on the opening day, May 1st, 1932. So also did the tractor plant at Stalingrad. Waste and inefficiency were universal. But men learned in the process. Stalin said, in December, 1934 (quoted by Webb,

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Soviet Communism: a New Civilisation? from *Moscow Daily News*, December, 1934):

"We were faced with a dilemma: either to begin by teaching people in technical schools, and to postpone for ten years the production and mass exploitation of machines, while technically literate cadres would be trained in schools; or to proceed immediately with the creation of machines and to develop their mass exploitation in the national economy, so as to teach people technique [and] prepare cadres in the very process of production and exploitation of machines. We chose the second course. We openly and deliberately agreed to the inevitable costs and extra expenditures involved in the shortage of technically prepared people capable of handling machines. True, no small number of machines were smashed during this time. But to make up for this we have gained what is most precious, time . . . and have created what is most valuable in economy, cadres. . . . What was accomplished in Europe in the course of decades, we succeeded in accomplishing, roughly and in the main, in the course of three to four years. . . . Men must be grown as carefully and attentively as a gardener grows his favourite fruit tree."

A young lecturer in bio-chemistry in Moscow explained to me the *Udarnik* stage and its essential

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difference from the present Stakhanov stage thus:

"In the first Five-Year Plan we had no skilled workers, or very few. Consequently, if we wanted to do a job normally involving the work of ten skilled men, our only resource was simply to set 100 unskilled enthusiasts and shock workers on the job and hope for the best. Now we have reached a higher stage. The Stakhanov movement aims at employing exactly ten skilled men on a ten-man job, and no more, to make each worker a responsible master of his task, a designer, an expert, his own foreman, all in one. Just as the enthusiasm of Udarnikism applied to every possible kind of human activity during the unskilled phase of initial construction, so Stakhanovism applies equally to all kinds of activity during a higher stage."

The figures for technical education during recent years illustrate the social background of the gradual transformation of Udarnikism into Stakhanovism.

<i>Year</i>	<i>No of Technical Institutions</i>	<i>No of Pupils</i>	
1928	1,650	253,600	
1931	2,932	593,700	(U.S.S.R.
1932	3,096	754,100	<i>Handbook,</i>
1933	3,522	797,000	page 416)
1934	3,522	683,000	

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There are many other comparable figures showing the improvement in workers' education of every conceivable kind. In the Soviet Union, the extreme shortness of the working day and the long holidays with full pay enjoyed by all city workers give very considerable opportunities for study. More important than anything, in this matter, is the psychological impetus of popular praise given to the worker who studies in his spare time (his wall newspaper is the most important medium of praise), and also the by no means negligible sense of social enthusiasm for activity that is considered to be part of the revolution itself. In the West there is always room for cynicism in the mind of the worker, who may feel that he is encouraged to work primarily for the benefit of shareholders whose faces he never sees and who themselves are interested in nothing but the prospect of dividends earned by the sweat of his brow. Anyone who thinks carefully of the real meaning, in terms of work and sweat, of the lists of Stock Exchange prices and dividends published in our daily newspapers, and of the narrow, bargain-hunting viewpoint of the prospective investor when he scans these pages, should realise the vital distinction between the urge to "get on" in the mind of the Soviet worker and the corresponding impulse in the mind of the "good boy" under capitalism.

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So much for the policy of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" with regard to the productivity of the human being. In all this the most important thing to bear in mind is that the increase in technical productivity proceeds under the ægis of an entirely different philosophy of life from its counterpart in England and America. In Russia the essential Marxian conception of freedom is manifest. A Soviet factory—with its great red banners and slogans, all of which are put up, not by any capitalist ministry of propaganda, inspired by a leering, frantic Goebbels nor by a big-mouthed Mussolinian pomposity, but by the thousands of workers themselves, its wall newspaper discussing all the affairs of working life, both humorous and serious, its Lenin Corner of Rest (almost a little chapel), its thousands of photographs of Stakhanov or other distinguished workers, its training shops, its crèches and miniature hospital and its gardens for the factory children, its parks for recreation, its athletic fields, its theatres and its really beautiful holiday homes in the mountains and by the sea—is a machine for the production, not of profits for shareholders (as under Fascism) but of things and men. Just as the capitalist workshop will, inevitably, transform men into revolutionaries, so the Soviet factory transforms

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revolutionaries into a new kind of civilised humanity. Ford's conveyor belts in Detroit manufacture not only motor cars, but Babbits. His conveyor belts at Gorki do something else.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NEW RUSSIAN: LEISURE

IN the last chapter I have tried to explain the relation between the intensive increase in the productivity of human labour, in the Soviet Union, to the Marxian conception of freedom. It now remains for me to say something about Soviet values, of the Communist view of leisure. What do people in Russia do with their spare time, and why? What do they think it desirable to make of their personal lives? What is the Communist vision of the good life, individual and collective?

Now the human being may be looked upon as an instrument for the attainment of ends, his own or those of others. He may be regarded, as by religious thinkers, as a tool in the hands of God, as clay with which the Deity moulds the likeness of his fancies. In Russia the latter theological and devotional (or possibly cynical) ways of looking at man are rigidly excluded, and we are left with the physical organism, man, a bundle of tissues and nerve-endings capable of experiencing

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pains and satisfactions of an infinitely variable nature.

Let us, in accordance with the Communist approach, confine ourselves to the material thing, man. It is at once clear that his desires and aversions vary from day to day and from place to place, and that no two men are in all respects alike. How, then, can the Communist be entitled, in his Socialist universe, to prescribe for the satisfactions of his fellow-men? How does the Soviet democracy justify its decisions as to what desires, bodily and mental, shall be satisfied from day to day?

This problem, which is none other than that of the definition of the good life, as distinct from the sociological and economic problem of the means of its attainment, worried me a great deal before I went to the Soviet Union. Indeed, at the back of my reading of history and of sociology lay always concern for criteria of excellence, for schemes of values. Communism seemed to me always to present the paradox of an enthusiasm for a means rather than for an end. It seemed to me to resemble the craving of the human being for a motor car, a mere means of transport, or the craving of almost all men for the possession of money. "Going places and seeing things," a vague notion of the things money will buy, rather than any specific idea of goodness, or even of a specific range of

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purchases, always seems to me a most unsatisfactory notion of value. In wanting money, surely one should have a clear idea of the nature of the desired purchases, rather than of the mere quantity of the means of effecting them. Does the Soviet citizen make careful distinctions between means and ends, in this way? And if not, how can his "philosophy of the good life," if any, be superior to any other in the modern world?

Now the means of attaining ends may be more or less effective, in different social systems, and I am convinced that the nature of the Soviet means is indisputably better, in the sense that they have a greater survival value, than those of capitalism. Indeed, it is this aspect of the matter which has been stressed throughout this book, for I have a peculiar feeling of reverence for the inexorable laws of evolution, which care nothing for the purposes of man's actions, but only for his success or failure in devising means for their attainment.

It seems to be broadly true that the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and the enthusiasm of the Russian people as a whole, seem to be concerned mainly with means rather than with ends. The visitor to the Soviet Union, almost invariably, marvels at the sheer exuberance of this enthusiasm. He sees workers in factories or in the open air doing arduous tasks in an atmosphere

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redolent with an extraordinary élan. He sees children marching in thousands, singing the "Internationale," as they reach the coast at Yalta, on a huge bathing expedition from their camp at Artek. I stood for half an hour in the Moscow Park of Culture and Rest, watching twenty or thirty girls, in sports attire, learning to juggle with little white balls. I watched hundreds of athletes, in various parts of the Union, learning to do complex trapeze acts, to hurl the javelin and the discus. I saw over a hundred people, in deep silence, playing chess under the trees, on tressle benches. This was no mass tournament, but merely a leisure occupation. At Rostov I watched about a hundred people doing the most complicated folk dancing to the accompaniment of concertinas. At Kharkov railway station, in a large waiting-room, I was astonished to see a large group of people, Red Army men, porters, engine-oilers, peasants and clerks, patiently and with deep interest, listening to a lecturer speaking on elementary physics. It was a hot July afternoon and all were sweating profusely, yet the close interest of this heterogeneous group of proletarians, utilising a spare two hours' wait for a train in the practice of what they described as "culture," was quite manifest. In Moscow a young chemist told me that he had spent his two months' vacation, in the summer of

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1935, lecturing to Red Army men at their camps in Turkestan on "The Origins of Life." This was voluntary, unpaid work. He told me, in addition, that he spent one free day in every two travelling out to collective farms around Moscow to lecture to the young people on the farms on elementary science. In Leningrad I stood for a long time in the Park of Rest watching a large group of people learning to sing. A girl stood on a box and sang each verse very slowly, after which everyone repeated it in unison. The words of the song were upon the usual theme of: "We are happier in the Soviet land! Life is better!" The rhythm was catchy and reminded me of our own musical-hall songs, rather than a creation of "ideological significance." All over the Soviet Union, in trains, on ships and in the streets, I heard people singing these catchy tunes, each having a collective, political significance, though sung in the same, care-free spirit as our own croon songs are sung by errand boys at home. Yet, in the new Soviet songs there is no mawkish, pimping sex element whatever. In the cool and sheltered Park of Rest at Yalta, one evening, I wandered into an open-air theatre (there are several open-air theatres in every park), at which a first-rate symphony orchestra from Moscow was performing. I was astonished at the nature of the audience, manual

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labourers nearly all of them, with a large sprinkling of Red Army men. At Kislovodsk, a convalescent place in the Caucasus for heart cases, I watched an open-air vaudeville performance, with a good jazz band, which played both American and Russian tunes superbly well. The audience applauded wildly. In almost all parks one sees roundabouts and hoopla shies and shooting ranges, just as at an ordinary fair in the West, but without any appeal to the public to spend its money upon them. In Moscow park I saw little stands containing cross-word puzzles, acrostics and others. No prizes are offered. The people stop casually in their evening stroll to glance at the puzzles, perhaps solve one, and pass on. Nowhere is there any commercial inducement to spend money in this way or in that, for the state is in no way more interested in selling one commodity than another. If man has a desire to do cross-word puzzles, let him do them. The question of the sales of a newspaper or similar consideration does not enter into Soviet leisure. There are no stupendous prizes that Must Be Won. In Moscow park also I saw a stand at which two skilful women were explaining to people how to make fancy costumes and grotesque masks in the home for festive occasions. Again, there was no charge for admittance to the stand, and the women had nothing to sell. It was just a free lesson in

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how to spend leisure in a mildly constructive manner. At another stand a doctor sat on a little platform, waiting to give medical advice to anyone who came to him. He would advise people concerning the clinics to attend for this or that pain, on the question as to whether a trivial complaint could be treated simply at home or required hospital treatment. At still another stand a lawyer was engaged to explain to applicants any difficulties relating to their civil status, with regard to marriage, divorce and personal property. No charge could be made either by doctor or lawyer, who was paid by the city Soviet. At Livadia, the beautiful palace of the Tsars on the Crimean coast, I saw in the old gilded ballroom a group of workers learning to dance under the instruction of an expert in modern ballroom steps. They were keen and there were peals of laughter continuously. The beautiful palace overlooking the sea is now a rest and holiday home for 500 workers from mines and factories all over the Union. People needing a holiday and belonging to the Stakhanov grade could spend a month here. It is full all the year round. The Black Sea coast and the Western Caucasus are covered with new and very fine sanatoria and holiday homes built or rented by factories and trade unions and other organisations all over Russia. Gagri, on the Caucasus Black Sea coast, I

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thought was the most beautiful place of all. Here were only a few white buildings on the mountain sides, at the edge of the sea. There were no motor cars in the place, and no noise at all. A Russian girl went ashore with me at this place and we bathed in a secluded spot, swimming on our backs and looking up at the exquisite coast and white buildings and flowers. Here about a hundred workers spend their holidays, sunning themselves, reading and eating and drinking.

I could continue this list of memories for a long time. Each is an illustration of ways in which spare time is utilised. On the dry hills above Tiflis I watched about twenty people practising gliding, a dangerous-looking business undertaken largely by people in the Red Air Force and by members of special clubs for the purpose. Then there are many beautiful theatres especially for children, in which stage and screen are carefully combined. I did not see a show in a children's theatre, for it was the school summer holiday, but I saw a remarkable one under construction at Kiev. Another development for children is the Palace of Pioneers, one of which is now to be found in each big town. The Pioneers are a vast, All-Union organisation of children between the ages of eight years and puberty, a kind of recruiting ground for the Komsomols, or junior members of the Communist

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Party. The Palace of Pioneers is a large building devoted entirely to the hobbies and interests of children. Any Pioneer may spend his or her spare time in the libraries and workshops of the Palace, entirely without payment of any kind. In the Palace at Stalingrad I wandered from room to room, watching groups of children devoting themselves to their various interests. A room full of little girls embroidering captured my attention. The girls flocked around me and showed me their work, embroidered pictures of houses, trees, aeroplanes, a huge bust of Stalin, a ship and some animals. Another room was full of small boys at benches, making toy aeroplanes with plywood, wire, glue and fretsaws. The youngster in charge (the palaces are almost entirely managed by the children themselves) explained that anybody in the town, on becoming a Pioneer, could use this room and the tools in it if he did good hobby work at school. The boys received a lecture once a week by an expert on aeronautics, who guided the childish enthusiasm of the boys, not merely into constructive toy-making, but according to the real principles of flight. The little aeroplanes were not merely toys; they were actual models. In two more rooms there were wireless sets of every description, and both boys and girls were studying them. A ginger-haired boy in charge

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explained to me that his comrades in this department not merely "played" at wireless, they actually broadcast programmes to all the other Palaces of Pioneers in every part of the Soviet Union, the programmes being relayed from the city broadcasting station.

In the Rostov Palace of Pioneers I watched little boys studying models of ships, cranes and railway sidings such as were used on the Don river, at the port. They gave me a demonstration of the unloading of a ship. At Stalingrad, where the tractors and other agricultural machines are made, the Palace contains models of internal-combustion engines in section. A lecturer explains the models and diagrams to a group of little boys and girls, who spend much of their time copying the models in crayon and mastering their intricacies perfectly. All kinds of other less immediately useful hobbies, from pond life and microscopes to astronomy and telescopes, and reading in the library, are heavily subsidised for children, and Palaces of Pioneers are among the most impressive pieces of social achievement in the Soviet Union. In the innumerable workers' clubs all over the country similar facilities are available for the exercise of the personal interests of adults.

All these things are concerned with leisure. Yet what is the determining line, the focal point of it all?

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Here I must admit a certain defeat. I do not know. On the other hand, I do not think Communists themselves are willing to give a specific answer to the question: "What is the nature of the good life?" If hard pressed, the Communist would probably argue along the following lines.

How, he would ask, may one specify the objects of the good life in a continuously changing world? The cumulative increase in the fund of knowledge constitutes a new basis for morals, for æsthetics and for sociology. In the past, classes of society, whether in Periclean Athens, Augustan Rome, St. Thomas's Medieval Europe, Elizabethan England or France of the eighteenth century, as monopolists of "surplus value," were free to concern themselves with ultimate values, taking as their most important premise a certain fixity in the quantum of knowledge. They did this, either because, in fact, the means of satisfying desires were given for very long periods of time, or because these classes, by their position in the social scheme, were relieved of anxiety concerning the acquisition of whatever forms of wealth existed. Thus, only during periods when the technical means of satisfying desires are either static or in the hands of a special class enjoying a permanent surplus of wealth, is man in the philosophical position of having to

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determine for himself finely delineated schemes of values. We may classify these periods into two phases. Firstly, we have the period from antiquity down to the Renaissance in Europe. In this period we may include the civilisations of Egypt, Babylon, Assyria and Crete. During the whole of this long period, although changes in the technical, as distinct from the social means of satisfying wants occurred, the intervening periods were exceedingly long. For this reason society, through the medium of its dominant classes, was able to prescribe for itself a series of specific patterns for the good life, with their corresponding rules for behaviour. It was the period of tablets of laws and casuistries, the Hammurabi, the Rigveda, the Talmud, the laws of Moses and the rules of St. Thomas, and the like. Specific forms of plastic beauty, specific kinds of leisure activity, specific forms and subjects for poetry, specific colours, even, for painting, all these comparative fixities rested upon a comparatively changeless structure of technical knowledge, upon which the satisfaction of desires must always rest. For the peasant, the serf or the slave a special kind of plough, a special kind of house, of food and of clothing, unchanging for centuries of time, in themselves contributed to fixity in the casuistry of right and wrong, of ugly and beautiful doings and

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things. For the dominant class, also, special kinds of amusements and luxuries, sports, ways of making war, of taking a bath (very important where matters of sex ethics and personal morals are concerned),* of taking food and of adorning the person, by their very permanence, were the basis of definitive codes of æsthetic and moral values.

Let us, not altogether in accordance with orthodox usage, call this long period that of Universalism. The next period is characterised by change. With the advent of Galileo, man's basic methods of unravelling truth underwent a fundamental change, a change marked by the commencement of the long conflict between "science" and "religion." Mere logic, mere ratiocination, mere divine inspiration, ceased to be the sole methods of arriving deliberately at the truth of any proposition. Henceforward something new, the making of deliberate experiments, became the principal determining factor in the discovery of truth, or Law, as it came now to be called. In order to make an experiment it is necessary for man, in one way or another, to interfere with his environment. The illustration of any law, the "testing" of its operation, involves physical tampering with the flux of "God-given" nature, actuality. In actuality, although law is

* See J. Langdon Davies, *A Short History of the Future*.—Routledge.

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universally operative, its workings can only be measured exactly by the scientific process of abstraction, involving isolation of conditions relevant to special functions, and by controlled experiment.

Now the vital distinction between the universalistic period and the new, post-Renaissance forms of thought, is simply that the results of the former are static, whilst those of the latter are dynamic. The results of purely speculative inquiry, carried out without the processes of experimentation and verification, are the creations of individual philosophers, who, with their disciples and schools and their influence upon conduct, live and die like the schools of art history. They perish, not as individual creations but as contributions to any fund of growing knowledge. The results of scientific experiment, however, are cumulative. Experiment refutes certain propositions, which are cast aside, holds others in abeyance and vindicates yet others. In course of time the latter serve as the premises of still further experimentation, and so on indefinitely. Each experiment, therefore, unlike each school of philosophy or art, stands directly, in time, upon the shoulders of its predecessors. The links in the chain are never broken.

The very existence, however, of a cumulatively growing body of knowledge, a state of affairs in which

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the desires of the present may be satisfied in the near future, but not to-day, merely on account of a possible change in the quantum of knowledge, must cause a profound disturbance to any single system of values. "What the eye does not see the heart does not grieve for," is all very fine, but supposing the heart knows that what the eye may not see to-day it may very possibly see to-morrow. How, then, can the heart decide what to grieve for or not to grieve for?

Now, the second period we have been considering is characterised by two things; namely, on the one hand a growing fund of knowledge and, on the other, the persistence of a privileged class, seeking to justify its privileges in continually changing ways. Capitalist democracy implies a limited freedom within the bounds of which the possessing (shareholding) classes may adjust themselves to the shifting material basis upon which ideological* constructions must rest. Stability, any permanent goal, any universally accepted scheme of values, is impossible, either for the ruling class or for the proletariat. For, in order to achieve any such stability, it would be necessary to "burn the books" (after the idiotic fashion of the Fascists), destroy the machines and the laboratories and create an

* An "ideology" is a mode of thought which serves the purpose of justifying a particular set of class relationships. See Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*.—Kegan Paul.

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Erewhonian condition of fixity in the nature of the means of production. The difficulty of discovering a code of values was once explained to me by a young poet, who said he found it impossible to deal satisfactorily in his poetry with the constant procession of new things, machines, customs, buildings and ideas, which entered into his daily field of apprehension. For, he said, following Marcel Proust, the psychological foundations of poetry consisted in the ability of the mind to resurrect from its own past a synthesis of continued experience. Behind each poetic suggestion, say, of an October morning, lay the knowledge of a hundred October mornings, behind each verse describing a woman's limbs lay a succession of limbs, each of which, from the continuum of the poet's own individual past memory, contributed subtly to his conception of feminine value. In other words, in order that a man may write satisfactory verse (discover values) his nerve-endings should be exposed to a host of repeated, only slightly varied stimuli, as for example the stimuli of a succession of views from a single cottage or street window, under the gently changing conditions of light and shade.

What is true of the experience of my young poet is true also for the psychological basis of value in the community as a whole. Only continuity in the

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identity of objects of experience, the modes of birth, marriage and death, of food, rejoicing and suffering, can yield continuous values. But the modern world, and the Soviet world especially, is a world of ceaseless change. Both the conditions of work and of leisure, small elements in which have been described in this and the previous chapter, are here to-day and gone to-morrow.

What, then, can I say of Soviet values?

I repeat, the shifting basis of knowledge implies a changing environment. This, in turn, involves a continuous change, sometimes gradual, sometimes catastrophic, in the corresponding structure of values. This state of affairs applies both to Soviet Communism and to the capitalist West. The difference, however, lies in the historical and sociological modes by which changing values evolve, the difference, in short, between capitalist and Soviet democracy.

Capitalist democracy is concerned with the preservation of power, and therefore of authority in the realm of values, in the hands of the employer class. Soviet democracy, on the other hand, is concerned with the widest possible diffusion of power and of the development of conscious values among the working people. The prevention of the development of an economic power group, directly employing the rest of the people, by the removal of the power of money

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over the economic structure of society; these things give meaning to Chapter XI of the *New Constitution*. Article 136 says:

"Elections of deputies are equal: every citizen has the right to elect and be elected, irrespective of race or nationality, religion, standard of education, domicile, social origin, property status or past activities."

Article 138 says:

"Citizens serving in the Red Army have the right to elect and be elected on equal terms with all other citizens."

Article 141 says:

"Candidates are nominated for elections according to electoral districts.

"The right to nominate candidates is granted to public organisations and societies of toilers, Communist Party organisations, trade unions, co-operatives, youth organisations and cultural societies."

Article 141 is the most important in this regard. It signifies that only *organisations of workers* may nominate candidates for Soviet elections, whether local or central.

These articles, it should be remembered, although they form part of the "new" constitution, amount, in fact, to little more than written statements of already existing principles.

There is a great deal, of course, to be said about the

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organisational basis of democracy in the West and in the Soviet Union respectively. Here, with regard to conceptions of value, I wish to emphasise only the main difference between the two systems, the class formation of capitalist democracy into communities of employers and employed in company organisations, and the formation of the Soviet economy, in which all are employees administered by elected chiefs whose pay is democratically determined, and under the ægis of the Marxian conception of freedom. Freedom comes when work is finished, and values are cultivated in leisure. Therefore opportunities for leisure must be distributed as evenly as possible among the entire population. Thus already Soviet workers in ordinary trades work only a forty-two-hour week and in dangerous and unhealthy tasks only thirty-six hours. All are guaranteed work, leisure, paid holidays and the opportunity for "culture," for the attendance of lectures and study courses on almost every conceivable kind of subject. Again, these things, although embraced in rights in the constitution, have existed, in fact, for some years. It is significant, also, that of the total wages bill, the total national income, that is, over one-third, is devoted to social insurance, to cultural purposes, the erection of crèches, training schools, sports grounds, recreation areas, holiday resorts,

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sanatoria, theatres, cinemas and lectures. This utilisation of "socialised wages" is decided, not, as under capitalism, by a system of direct taxation, endowments by private millionaires and collections for charity, but by agreement among trade unionists in the various productive enterprises as to what proportion of the wage bill shall be so spent, together with direct grants from the local and federal budgets. It should be remembered, again, that budget revenue is derived, not from direct taxation of the rich, as under capitalism, but from the proceeds of taxes on retail goods.

In spite of the natural inclination of the reader of this book to look not without a little scorn upon this stress of mere matters of organisation, these differences in the methods of elections and finance are extremely important in any discussion of values. For, in the West, the very fact that the employing class, in virtue of direct taxation and the system known as charity, bears almost the whole burden of the cost of social legislation and cultural amenities for the people, lends a very definite colour to our popular conceptions of the good life. The mere division of the community into tax-paying and benefit-receiving classes, as well as into employing and employed along the same lines, implies a deep-seated cleavage of interests. It implies that every conception of value must be judged, not

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merely according to its intrinsic worth, but according to its effects upon the two great classes involved. Soviet economy is entirely free of this kind of cleavage and, to this extent at least, is already "classless," with regard to the interpretation of values.

That is really all, at bottom, that I can say about values in the Soviet Union. One or two incidental matters are of interest and require some attention.

Firstly, although any fixity in the scheme of values is ruled out, both under capitalism and in the Soviet Union, by the mere fact of a continuously changing environment, yet certain incidental notions remain fairly constant. In modern Russia, for instance, it is realised that such values as exist at all must be the outcome less of passive receptivity than of the active exercise of talent. For this reason the commissariats of education in the various republics of the Union, which have control over most of the organised leisure of the community, the State Publishing organisations and the various cultural organisations, cinemas and theatres, seem to have set themselves the task of eliminating passivity as far as possible. In this matter it is almost as though the people of the Soviet Union had all of them read carefully Mr. Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and had silently agreed that this "will not do." Mr. Huxley's book, it will be remembered, describes

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the horrors of an imaginary utopia of scientific achievement, a world in which almost every conceivable want may be satisfied by mechanical and chemical devices of all kinds. Humanity, in this universe, relaxes. Distress of every kind may be relieved by the taking of a Soma tablet or a piece of sex hormone chewing gum. Pleasure can be secured obviously and passively by the mechanical titillation of the erogenous areas of the surface of the human body, by all sorts of mass erotic sports, by Feely Palaces and by universal and highly sanitary sexual promiscuity. Leisure, in such a world, is just one long succession of Paris brothels on a community basis. If science satisfies desires, then, says Mr. Huxley, the utopia of the future will satisfy them with a vengeance.

As we can see, this is not altogether an optimistic picture of material progress. It is perfectly true that the growth of knowledge will, in the course of time, provide mankind, especially Soviet mankind, with the technical means of creating a "Brave New World." It will do so, however, only if humanity so wills it, for the use of knowledge is never, except under a system controlled entirely by the so-called laws of supply and demand, an automatic process. It is of the essence of Communism, however, that it sets the mind free from such externally imposed laws. It exalts to enormous

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heights the autonomy of human will within any given environmental framework. Thus the Soviet Communist of to-day views the growth of knowledge as a foundation, not merely for the limitless satisfaction of passive, erotic impulses, but for the exercise of talent. All men, feels the Communist, may one day be poets, singers, actors, athletes, sculptors, musicians and philosophers. When every man need work no more than a couple of hours a day, then each may devote the rest of his day to the enunciation of values, the formation of schools of thought and to artistic creations on a scale hitherto unheard of, and to forms of strife, not upon the political (bread and butter), but upon the intellectual plane. Such, indeed, is the underlying philosophy of the "withering away of the state." There will be no fixity in the scheme of values, for there will never be any end to the growth of knowledge, but there will be no limit, either, to the fecundity of the mind. What is most important of all is that this fecundity will rest upon the cultivation of active, rather than passive states of mind. The relaxation of the senses into a condition of passivity, without the counterbalancing achievements of action, will always, it is hoped, be castigated as decadent; the ascetic element in all aspiration will always be praised. This is the basis of Communist optimism.

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Thus, in the Soviet Union of to-day, whilst it is perfectly true that most intellectual vigour is concentrated upon the perfection of means, the attainment of the classless society, rather than upon the nature of ends whose nature cannot be foreseen, yet life is imbued throughout with an element of powerful asceticism. This asceticism is mundane and practical, having no "Nonconformist" element of sensual abnegation or morbid self-despisement in it whatever.* It is the vigorous asceticism of the athlete in training, the sailor at sea or the scientist who, by careful attention to his bodily health, keeps his eyesight good and his fingers steady for the handling of delicate instruments.

With regard to less exalted forms of asceticism, I may give one small example illustrating sex morals such as I found them generally in modern Russia. This example should be read with caution, for if there is any field in which Soviet views change almost from hour to hour it is that of sex morals.

In Leningrad I made friends with one of the English-speaking guides. We went for several long walks in the Park together, and took several meals in street and open-air cafés. She was attractive, intelligent, smartly

* It is fashionable to liken Soviet asceticism to the morbid asceticism of early nineteenth-century English industrialism. Such a comparison seems to me utterly futile.

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"made up" and appeared to be a very happy person. Her age was twenty-seven. Explaining her life to me, she said that she was married, but lived alone, with her mother. Her husband was a theatrical producer who worked in Murmansk, the only unfrozen port on the Arctic coast. She had a small boy, aged five, who lived with relatives of hers at Batum, on the Black Sea. She said she and her husband, between them, earned plenty of money and lacked nothing but house-room. I asked her why she did not live with her husband and child, either at Murmansk or in Leningrad, in a "normal" domestic fashion. The explanation was as follows. Her husband could, if he wished, get a much better-paid job in Leningrad than in Murmansk, but he preferred the latter. He lived a completely ascetic life in the far North, meeting scarcely any women and devoting himself entirely to his self-chosen job, the raising of enthusiasm among the primitive inhabitants of the North for the building and working of a really fine theatre. Her husband had devoted his life to this cause and would sacrifice everything for it. Then, I asked, why did she not herself go to Murmansk and help him in his job. She explained that she also had her job and was very busy, especially during the winter months, studying for a degree at the university, a degree in the Marxist interpretation of history and the

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history of the Communist Party. She was wildly interested in these subjects which, she said, enabled her to interpret the attitudes of mind of the thousands of silly tourists from all over the world with whom she had to deal. Did she, then, I asked, never see her husband? Oh yes, was the reply. During her month's vacation she always went up to Murmansk, where she and her husband spent all their money in riotous living together. Then, during the dark winter months, he would come South and the two of them would spend a month at Batum, where again the programme was one of vodka and song. The remaining ten months of the year, however, were spent in energetic and studious celibacy.

Apart from occasional exceptional instances, life in Russia is rather ascetic. There are no "leg shows," and such "mere amusements" as exist are firmly controlled. There are millions of newspapers, far more than in the West or America, yet they contain no advertisements designed merely to arouse passive desires, no idle inducements to spend money. The vodka shops, even, are covered with signs urging people not to drink, and the Peoples' Commissar for Food Industries last year congratulated the people upon the diminished consumption of spirits which, he declared, had been counterbalanced by increased

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consumption of wines and beers. People are urged to cultivate every conceivable kind of talent, from athletics to juggling and playing musical instruments. They are urged, in their rapidly growing leisure, to learn to dance, to study history and sociology, to paint and to sing. The attainment of universal freedom from financial anxiety (anxiety for one's job) is hailed by the Soviet people, not as an occasion for passive pleasure-making but as the moment from which the human spirit shall advance to concentrated, disciplined, individual culture. Culture is not defined; it is discovered. Discovery is the child, not of passivity but of curiosity.

In all this the bitter pessimism of our Western intellectuals, with their hopeless warnings derived from the analogies of insect life, their harking backwards to ages that are dead, their suicidal "back-to-the-womb" outlook, is completely absent.* In the West, our intellectuals are not wholly to blame, although they show no signs whatever of ability to lead the masses into any kind of struggle. The appalling passivity of the Western, spoon-fed masses, with their brothels, their "croon songs," their childlessness (who wants to have a child in a world pecked

* For an example of this moribund attitude see Eric Gill, *Work and Property*.—Dent.

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by public-school masters and blessed by archbishops?), their empty chatter, their salesmanship, their Ivor Novellos, Noel Cowards and Powyses, not to mention their A. P. Herberts—all of it spells its own doom. The absence of fixity in Western values is countered, on the one hand, by Fascism, the sterile endeavour to foist upon the masses the values of the past, and on the other by Communism, a vigorous march into the future, a future of power in the working masses to grapple with the unknown.

CHAPTER IX

THE SOVIET PERSPECTIVE AND THE FUTURE

IN this final chapter I want to indulge in the dangerous business of speculating upon the future of the Communist vision in Russia. Communism is distinguished from all the other utopias of history in possessing an intensely actual sense of the passage of time. Since utopia depends upon actual economic possibilities, then the direction of Communism is quite self-consciously held to rest upon the Plan, the plan of real, tangible alteration of the conditions under which men live. For this reason, it is very instructive to consider some of the other historical perspectives once more from the point of view of their sense of time, and to compare them with the Soviet perspective.

Many perspectives possess virtually no sense of time whatever. The Anabaptists, anarchists and Indian mystics of various kinds are concerned with a sudden transformation of the mind. The mystical "revolutionary" lives in recollection of ecstasy or in longing for it. He thinks of a transformation of

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society achieved, not by deliberate stages of interference with the physical environment, but by a spasmodic deliverance of the soul from the chains of temporal existence.* Deliverance is achieved by orgiastic plunging into the destruction of authority. Professor Mannheim† quotes Münzer of the Chiliastic movement of the early seventeenth century: "I seek only that you accept the living word in which I live and breathe, so that it should not come back to me empty. Take it to your hearts, I beseech you in the name of the red blood of Christ. I take an account of you and I wish you to give an account of myself. Can I not do this, may I be the child of temporal and eternal death. A higher pledge I cannot give you." Meister Eckhart also says (*op. cit.*, quoted): "Nothing so much hinders the soul from knowing God as time and space."

This timelessness, however, is the subjective aspect of profoundly real gestures in the material world. There is a true utopia, a true hunger for some kind of revolutionary change in the here and now, and for this reason, of course, the Anabaptists were firmly put down by the church itself, whose outlook was and remains ideological, that is to say, pledged to defend the *status quo*. To believe that "God himself takes the

* The attitude coming to be recognised as Trotskyism is largely of this order.

† Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*.—Kegan Paul, 1936.

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scythe to cut the weeds from among men," or that "Man should and must know that God is within him and should not think of Him as a thousand miles away," when these things are interpreted in the immediate and politically revolutionary sense in which the Christian proletariat of the decadent Roman Empire thought of them, was, of course, "not done," and was dealt with accordingly, by the holders of a more realistic time sense. Professor Mannheim says: "The Chiliast expects a union with the immediate present. Hence, he is not preoccupied in his daily life with optimistic hopes for the future or romantic reminiscences. His attitude is characterised by a tense expectation. He is always on his toes awaiting the propitious moment and thus there is no inner articulation of time for him."

Similarly, the Anarchist Bakunin, also quoted by Mannheim, says: "The will to destroy is a creative will. I do not believe in constitutions or in laws. The best constitution would leave me dissatisfied. We need something different. Storm and vitality and a new lawless and consequently free world." This view, like that of the Anabaptists, is virtually without a sense of the passage of time. The past and the present of the world merge into a single vision of tyranny. The present and the future coalesce into an horizonless

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triumph of the spirit of man. It is important to meditate upon the importance of this feeling in all political revolutions, all warfare, all social tensions. All of them are supported on an ocean of timeless feeling of this kind, a feeling expressed no less in the thoughts and writings of poets than in the actions of men and women at the barricades. Again, all moments in which endings and beginnings are conjoined, as in the agony of childbirth, the seconds of a kiss and in the bloodshed of death, are felt as timeless in the same sense. In the living mentality of man there can, indeed, be no objective measure of time. He may know of a uniform pacing of the hours, but so long as he is alive man cannot feel it, and the variety of his feeling, its lack of objectivity, is also the variety of his politics.

The liberal conceives of utopia as a "formal goal projected into the future, whose function is to act as a regulative device in mundane affairs" (Mannheim, *op. cit.*, p. 197). Each libertarian change is progress; each authoritarian act retrogression, whilst, as the liberals attain to power, the ultimate goal slips further into the misty horizon of the future.

In contrast with these views of the significance of time that of the Conservative is unconsciously retrospective. The past is regarded as virtually present,

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in a body of "living" tradition. The further to the right does the Conservative power swing, the further into the remote past does the ideology penetrate in its search for traditional values. The future is a blank sheet, in which the language of the past must be gloriously rewritten. Indeed, opposition to change is essentially based upon the values of traditional experience, and can be felt only in these terms. For, divorced from the value elements of the past, the mere economic and institutional structure of the present can be viewed only as a set of mechanical devices for the maintenance of the dominant class in being, and not even the majority of Conservatives are willing to see value in this alone. Power must be embellished in a halo of traditional values. Naked power is disliked by all but the dilettante. Change can only be regarded as the investment of the existing structure with new evaluative directions, which, as such, cannot be felt by the Conservative mind.

To get away from the existing social frame of reference, and thus to deepen our appreciation of the time sense, which has great importance in connection with the Soviet perspective, let us say something of the time sense of the Egyptians and the ancient Greeks. This will provide us, to some extent, with a synthetic viewpoint from which the possible future of the

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Soviet time sense may be contemplated. We shall see the relation between the mode of apprehending time and the material basis of society.

The Egyptians seemed to view existence as a sort of Way, an endless procession, slowly pacing, even and rhythmic. The swing of the seasons, the need for orderliness in economic life (see the chapter on "Historical Perspectives" for the contrast between the chaotic elements of Nomadism and the orderliness of agricultural perspectives), the coincidence of transcendentalism and social hierarchic officialdom, all together prescribe a remarkable unity of thought and action, a continuum in which the relation between utopia and ideology is curiously uniform. This uniformity is expressed by Spengler thus (*Decline of the West*, vol. I, p. 188):

"The Egyptian's soul saw itself as moving down a narrow and inexorably prescribed life path, to come at the end before the judges of the dead. That was its Destiny-Idea. The Egyptian's existence is that of the traveller who follows one unchanging direction, and the whole form-language of his culture is a translation into the sensible of this one theme. And as we have taken *endless space* as the prime symbol of the North, and *body* as that of the Classical, so we may take the word *Way* as most intelligibly expressing that of the Egyptians."

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The Greeks, in contrast, were *a priori* liberals. Except in the case of Sparta, whose outlook was very like that of the Nazis in Germany, the Greek neither looked backwards nor forwards. His past dissolved easily into timeless mythology; his future did not seem to enter into political consciousness. He modelled his present life as a sculptor models clay, in the immediately pleasing image of rational liberalism. The Athenians, Solon, Cleisthenes, Pericles, each, in the long history of the city, conceived of civic life as something that could be modelled immediately into shape, by the intelligence of the living philosopher statesman. The absence of a sense of slowly or swiftly gathering momentum in time, or of a succession of material stages of evolution, as in Marxism, in Plato's Republic, is very significant in this regard. Egypt was agricultural and military. Greece was a maritime and commercial civilisation, resting upon contacts between man and man, rather than upon the one-sided interrelation between man and Providence, as in Egypt. The Egyptian required a suitable attitude to work and to nature, an attitude of unchanging routine. The Greeks, on the other hand, required a suitable body of laws to govern the relations of traders. The latter demand is satisfied by a "constitution," a body of legislative enactments brought

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into being immediately within the life-span of living man. The economic mode of life was basically changeless, and required only a suitable legal framework. Long periods of time, therefore, were of no great significance for the Greek. For the Egyptian, on the other hand, the situation was dictated by the behaviour of the Nile, whose movements, regular and rhythmic in themselves, demanded of society a routine, an orderly path of activity for man.

When comparing and contrasting various time perspectives, there are two interesting factors bearing upon the Soviet perspective that we may profitably consider. In the first place, all modern views are to be distinguished sharply from all ancient views by reason of the existence, with regard to the former, of continuous change, within the life-span of the human being, in economic technique. Economic technique, before the industrial revolution, underwent, of course, a host of changes, but the time-span of each phase was sufficiently long to evade the deliberative attention of thinkers. Political perspectives consisted, essentially, in conflicting views with regard to the ethics and expediency of alternative attitudes to a changeless technique of economic life. On the other hand, in modern times, conflict consists not merely in terms of alternative self-orientations to a changeless economic

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object, but also, as in a new dimension, of alternative deliberate changes in the technical programme, all of which are conceived as falling within measurable periods of time. In other words, in the past, strife was confined to problems of "what to do about it," "it" being considered as a tolerably constant form of economic apparatus, capable of producing only a given quantity of wealth. The class struggle was a struggle over a special amount of bread and butter and no more. Time perspectives were based upon a fairly constant economic and geographical scene. In the modern world, however, the problem is not merely "what to do about it," but what shall the "it" be. We have the technical power and knowledge to change, not merely the state of our ethical predilections, but the wealth basis of our very lives.

This distinction is of profound significance when we are considering the time perspectives of the modern capitalist world and of the Soviet Union. Marxism is the only political perspective that is also, in this special sense, also economic. Ethics and values, for the Soviet thinkers, are not absolute. Neither, on the other hand, is their spiritual force eliminated by a passive and nihilistic "relativity" feeling. Values are contingent upon changing economic technique, a technique whose changes themselves are actively

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determined by man himself. The determination of man is to survive by operating the technical means of production to the full. Wants are to be satisfied according to an expanding plan, and a plan can be achieved only in the course of measurable time. The famous Faustian "Space" feeling of Western man, elaborated by Spengler, assumes a new and measured mode of expansion in the Soviet Union. Experience shall be infinite, but the elation of the human spirit shall take the form, not merely of liberal, unplanned aspirations, but of measured, expanding concentric rings of material achievement.

Before considering the possible future of this time sense in Russia, let us compare this perspective with those of the various political standpoints in the capitalist world. It is fairly clear that no capitalist view comprehends time in a sense adequate to the situation before us. The Conservatives, challenged from below, seek only to justify a feudal conception of social-relationships by an appeal to traditional values. The past is telescoped, rediscovered and viewed as "living" in our "blood," our "race," our "country," and so on. The future presents itself to the Conservative as a battle between the forces of "anarchy" and the values derived from the past. Timeless, unchanging "human nature" will see to it that the forces of tradition shall

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triumph "in the end." The factor of changing technique is recognised, and "progress" welcomed by the Conservative. Indeed, "increasing welfare," accompanied by the "message of hope" of some royal or otherwise distinguished representative of the dominant group, is always a Conservative plank. But the deep philosophical and practical implications of technical change, its inevitable demand for changes in values, and its imposition upon humanity of a new time perspective: all this is not comprehended by the Conservative.

The Liberal perspective is less abysmal, for the conception of changing technique has succeeded, at least, in eliciting a sense of time direction in the Liberal consciousness. Yet this time direction, in virtue of its descent from the classical "here and now" conception of ideal laws under which the spirit of man would automatically assert itself, still contains a dangerous element of irrelevance to the modern situation. For modern society the time perspective must comprehend not merely the enactment of laws within the life-span of man, laws under which things will "shape themselves," but determine consciously upon a mode of transformation of the economic apparatus available. Only Marxism performs the philosophical feat of reconciling legislative enactment

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(with its classical timeless feeling) with ordered change in the economic basis of values. Free of fixed values, Marxism is entirely hard-boiled and relativistic. Insistent upon material change and upon a Plan, its time perspective incorporates both the essential prerequisites of a philosophy fit to survive in the modern world, namely, purposiveness and temporal realism.

With this general background, we may now approach the problem of the future in Soviet Russia and the repercussions of that future upon the rest of the world.

The previous parts of this book have been designed to apply to modern Russia a broad doctrine of natural selection. I have tried to explain why I believe that the survival of Soviet forms of society is now pretty certain.* The objective challenge facing the modern world has been faced. An economic and social mechanism has evolved for the task of co-ordinating the technical apparatus of production in a plan. Subjectively, the people in the Soviet Union have succeeded in bringing to bear upon the objective achievement, i.e. the technical apparatus, a scientific attitude of mind which alone is compatible with an adequate response to the modern challenge. This philosophical attitude, implying a special view of evil, of freedom and of time, has been explained

* See Appendix B.

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in this and previous chapters. What, then, of the future?

In the past, when anarchistic, orgiastic revolutionaries have attained to power, they have found it necessary to adopt one of two courses, or both. The arrival of utopia must either be placed at the end of a set of specific events in time; in short, the timelessness of anarchism must be shed and a sense of time be discovered immediately, or, on the other hand, the meaning of the utopian idea itself must be transformed. Slipping into a sphere "beyond time and space," like some of Mussolini's delectable spiritualities, it may become transcendentalised. At the same time, in order to justify the ascent to power of its adherents, the utopia must assume a material form. It must be identifiable by signs and marks. In other words, it must become a church.

Now the Russian revolution, like every revolution, was accomplished on a wave of largely Chiliastic, utopian enthusiasm, i.e. an ecstasy that was of necessity timeless, like that of an embrace. Something of the Russian revolutionary perspective has been described in an earlier chapter. How, then, we may ask, do the Russians view time and its relation to the utopia, Communism, to-day? Has it become merely a devotional ritual? Must it be postponed for ever, like

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the famous Christian brotherhood of man, or elevated to the realms of verbal mumbo-jumbo, like the "fellowship" mysteries of Toc H or the Boy Scouts, with moments of silence and lamp-burnings? Instead of making vigorous plans for the wholesale destruction of slums, does Stalin go about the "depressed areas" giving spiritualised "messages of hope," in the pathetic manner of a constitutional monarch in a Christian capitalist universe? When can anyone say: "Yesterday it was not Communism: to-day the millennium has been achieved"?

These questions, simple and naïf though they appear, are crucial, and I must make some attempt to answer them, in the light of my impressions of the Soviet Union itself.

I have stressed, in this book, only the survival value of the technical Soviet system and its underlying philosophy, yet both the system and the philosophy will change. There are a dozen possible alternative directions for the future, though none of them imply capitalism, in the Marxian sense of the private ownership of the means of production, with its accompanying technical and philosophical limitations. The Communist utopia is the stateless, classless society. The absence of the profit motive, the raising of the standard of life of the entire community well above the

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subsistence level, the extension to all of opportunities (as equally as is physically possible) for earning higher wages by training: these and a host of other things, it is claimed, give birth to a society whose group conflicts, for the first time in the period of written history, will be raised above the level of class strife over bread and butter. The state is nothing more than a police system for protecting the "haves" against the "have-nots." The Communist utopia is a society in which scientific planning shall have removed the "have-nots" from the face of the earth. This is possible only on account of the persistence of cumulative change in the scientific and technical basis of wealth production. This is the new element in history, of which society has been growing slowly more and more aware since the industrial revolution. In the Communist utopia, therefore, the sociological basis of the state will have "withered away."

When considering these various things, we should be most careful to use words only in the sense in which they are intended in the philosophy of Marxism. Capitalism means, not the existence of money, nor of personal riches, but solely in the private ownership of the means of production, which must divide any community into classes of employers and employees. Soviet economy has already abolished capitalism and

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classes in this special sense. There can be no more return to capitalism than bourgeois society could possibly return to a system of medieval handicrafts. The state, in Marxism, means only such elements in the regulative machinery of society as serve the function of protecting the interests of the employing class, and of creating the Socialised economic basis of Communism. The disappearance of an employing, owning class, and the progressive raising of the standard of living of the entire community, therefore, must be the basic conditions of the realisation of Communism: "From each according to his power: to each according to his need."

Now, is this merely a dream? Actually, we do not know. It may well be that the realisation of actual, tangible conditions under which people *may* contribute to the needs of society all that is in their power, and *may* receive in exchange all that they need to enable them to make these contributions, is possible. I believe that it is perfectly possible, for the development of man's power over nature, of the funds of real capital wealth, and of knowledge can move only in the direction of this Communist basis. So long as there is no limit to the growing fund of knowledge, so long must the horizon of true Communism face society. For this reason of logic, Communism is the only

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possible rational goal for the present age. The doubtful factor lies merely in the fact that the fundamental movement may be swift or slow. It is for this reason that I see a perpetual source of exceedingly healthy conflict in the Soviet Union. The direction in which society shall move cannot possibly be disputed. The end is Communism, and any departure from this goal will be stamped out like black magic, and rightly. I have no objection to seeing thousands of summary executions of people who desire to put the clock back by a return to capitalist conditions, which, by their very existence, must retard the basic movement. I am perfectly confident that almost all Russians agree with me here. On the other hand, the conflict which undoubtedly exists in the Soviet Union, and which will continue to exist for ever, concerns only the pace of movement. Faster movement involves, for economic reasons, less labour devoted to immediate consumption, and more to the production of capital goods for the future. Slower movement simply means the converse of this proposition. Some people will always demand faster, some slower movement. In this alone will lie the conflicts of ideas in the Soviet intellectual arena. The recent Trotskyist disputes arose originally merely as conflicts of this kind. The element of treason arose only after these disputes had

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been settled way back in 1926. When human beings are thwarted in their views by a majority vote among their colleagues, they become desperate. The abolition of such people is a perfectly healthy state of affairs. There may be a long series of such trials and executions, but the movement to Communism will go forwards, either slowly or swiftly, according to the conflicts within the party and the proletariat. There is nothing but life in this movement. For an explanation of the ruthlessness of Soviet justice, which itself rests directly upon the Marxian sense of freedom, the reader is asked to turn back to the chapter in which freedom is discussed ("The New Russian," Part I).

I have suggested that, on the attainment of power, an ascendant class, actuated by a utopian belief, must either postpone utopia or elevate it to a transcendental ecstasy, manifested on earth by a form of ritual. Now the peculiar time sense of Marxism had, before the revolution, already laid down the solution of this very practical problem. In the chapter on "Bloody and Bloodless Revolutions" I pointed out that the proletariat may attain to power in either of two ways. If we suppose peace, then capitalist competition will gradually negate itself; that is to say, it will automatically, via a series of booms and depressions, give place to giant monopoly and, despite the waste of advertisement

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and unemployment, bring with it a considerable raising of the standard of living. This is already happening in England and America. In this case capitalist industry spontaneously socialises itself, almost everybody becoming an employee of a giant monopoly. The advantages of expropriation by the "state," that is, by the wider proletariat, the democracy itself, gradually become apparent, and the revolution, the abolition of private ownership, and of the profit motive, together with compensation for displaced shareholders, and the institution of a Communist plan of economy, may all occur suddenly with very little bloodshed at all.* In this event the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat need only be very short, the utopia of a very mundane character and the ecstatic element in the situation comparatively small. On the other hand, a very rapid development of capitalism in a backward country, the sudden proletarianisation of large sections of a peasant population, with its stimulation of revolutionary desperation, as in modern Spain or old Russia or South America or Mexico or China, may condition a breakdown, resulting, perhaps, from the bringing to light of contradictions in a form of society older than that of

* The greater the power of the people, the less need be this compensation of shareholders. The richer the community, the greater the compensation may be. The amount of compensation necessary depends on the political possibilities of the revolutionary moment.

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capitalism, or the impact of war upon a country unprepared for it may, in the modern world, cause an exceedingly bloody revolution. Power, in such circumstances, is attained by a young proletariat which, under Leninist conditions, must set up its dictatorship. The essential difference between this supposition and the former, with regard to the Communist vision and the time perspective, is that the dictatorship has two, not one task to perform. It has to suppress a whole class which had not had time, in the course of capitalist evolution, to liquidate itself automatically. It has also to raise the standard of living by industrialising the community. Its plan is not merely the purely rational one of pure Socialism, the logical pathway to Communism, but a programme of progressive revolution, which must continue for long after the initial seizure of power. The revolution must be a continuing one.* The essential development of industry, instead of evolving spontaneously in the form of the negation of competition by monopoly, must be achieved directly by dictatorship. This was, and is, the state of affairs in Russia. For the reason that the revolution took place prematurely, as it were, in the process of Russian capitalism's gestation, and involved a blood bath of unexpected proportions, the

* I am not referring to Trotsky's "permanent revolution," which is concerned largely with certain considerations of international politics.

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revolutionary psychology was correspondingly ecstatic and to some extent timeless. The conflict between the true Marxists, with their hard and real sense of time, and the anarchists in Spain to-day, is an indication of the essential immaturity of all bloody revolution. It is in this sense, within the Marxian framework of ideas, that one may legitimately speak of the "sacrifice" and waste of vitality involved in bloody revolution.

As I have said, for the Russian Communists to appear suddenly before the people with the declaration that Communism had arrived would be a departure from the true position. To say any such thing at any point in finite time would amount to hypocritical mysticism. It would be "un-Marxian and undialectical." It would involve the substitution of ritual for direction. It would amount to a repetition of the hypocrisy of all churches in the modern world. On the other hand, there is danger in the perpetual reiteration of: "We are still only a Socialist society, but to-morrow we shall have attained to Communism." What, therefore, will happen to the doctrine, in the years to come, in the Soviet Union?

Here let me be so bold as to make a forecast. I do not believe the Party in the Soviet Union will ever make the mistake of declaring the arrival of Communism. On the other hand, I suggest that they will avoid, also, discussing the future date at which the

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of ethical notions and the enormous power of the human will over the material and human environment will come more and more to be recognised and expressed in deeds.

What of the influence of the Soviet world upon the lands of capitalism outside? Again, the immediate probability of war must be set aside in order that implications may be examined rationally. Perhaps by the time this book reaches the public we shall be fighting, in which case these remarks will have only antiquarian interest. Yet I propose to make them, nevertheless.

I suggest that, in future, our views of the Soviet Union will undergo a subtle change, a change already appearing in many ways. The memory of bloodshed and savagery slips inevitably into more and more distant memory, and the image of a new kind of society, whose very prosperity is very rapidly catching up with our own, will fix itself tightly in the mind. Instead of the Left Wing person in the West showing an inevitable tendency to falsify the facts when comparing the standards of living of Western and Soviet workers, it will be the Right Wing person who will find himself in this position. At the present moment the Leftist is in the position of having to say: "Yes, it is true that the standard of living of the Soviet workers is lower than

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that of the worker in England or America, *but* other things have to be taken into account." This always sounds weak. In future, however, it is the Right Wing critic who will be in this position. He will be saying: "Yes, it is true that they have a higher standard of living in Russia, *but* . . ." and any "but" will then sound lame. The old story about the "cost" in human suffering, the fifteen million lives lost in war, famine, revolution and civil war, will fall upon ears that are growing increasingly deaf as the catastrophes in question sink further and further into the past.

Meanwhile, Fascists will continue, under capitalism, to howl and perform their rituals at Nürnberg and Rome for the benefit of populations no less hungry than before, and people will cease to say complacently: "Yes, but Hitler has done marvels for Germany," or: "Yes, but the trains in Italy run on time now."

Then, the physical way of life of people in England and America, on the one hand, and in the Soviet Union on the other, will become very similar. The housing problem, in the Soviet Union, will be solved as the influx of peasants into the cities slackens, and it will slacken as the mechanisation of agriculture is completed. The absence of overcrowding, after a few years, will allow the family to reappear in Soviet society, firstly among the specialists and relatively

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highly paid workers, and gradually among the entire population. Then again, the motor car will gradually fill the streets of the cities and millions of families will own cars, just as they do in America. In every material way, life will become very similar to life in the capitalist world. All that will be lacking will be capitalism itself.

Barring war, I regard these events as virtual certainties for the future. What do they imply with regard to our historical perspectives? In the first place, they mean that our universe of discourse, with regard to the Left and Right Wing conflict, will be lifted to a higher plane. Then will emerge into the light of day the basic questions of the philosophy of life, the Marxian view of freedom, and the relation between the economic structure of society and man's ethical ideas. Then, inescapably, will appear the inadequacy of our Western *Weltanschauung*, our way of looking at the world. Then it will become clear that revolution is no mere question of a violent change of government but a fundamental readaptation, not merely of the machinery but of the spirit of living, to a new historical situation.

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THESE appendices are designed to point out the straightforward technical reasons why a collectivist economic system solves the broad economic problems that are left unsolved by capitalism. These questions have been dealt with many times before and by people far more competent than myself. On the other hand, any discussion of historical perspectives should be based upon an awareness of the technical changes in the economic structure of society upon which they are based. The reader who wants more is referred to the Socialist works of John Strachey and the orthodox economics of Professors Lionel Robbins, F. A. von Hayek and Maynard Keynes. I have read something of all of these writers, though I am not concerned to enunciate their theorems here. I should like to repeat that I find the logic of the non-Communist theorists better than that of John Strachey. On the other hand, I recognise that the positive recommendations of the orthodox academicians are practicable only within the existing system. They can in no way do more than tinker with that system, without removing any of its

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inconsistencies. Thus, I am not concerned with the *reasons* why capitalism does not work properly. I agree entirely with the liberal economists about this. I am interested only in wiping out the system altogether and replacing it by a more rational scheme of life and work. It is only on this vital and moral issue of politics that I part company with my own orthodox teachers.

Capitalism, like any other economic apparatus, is a method of organising work in society. The "capitalist" is largely an intellectual fiction, a useful abstraction without which it is not very easy to express oneself. Many people, in practice, are both capitalists and wage-earners at the same time. The director of a company, as a rule, is not only an owner of shares in his own and other concerns, but also earns a salary for which he does some of the work of making decisions in business. He is a "capitalist" and a "worker" at the same time. Again, many "workers" are not exclusively workers, but own small shares in industrial concerns from which, if they are lucky, they may receive profits from time to time. The "worker," therefore, is also a fiction, though not to the same extent as the "capitalist," for almost every company director owns shares, but only a few "workers" do so.

Thus, when one talks of capitalists and workers,

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especially in advanced countries, where the ownership of the technical means of production is comparatively widely diffused, one should be referring, not so much to real persons as to social functions, namely, those of owning the means of production, the tools of labour (via the mechanism of stocks and shares), and of doing work for wages, functions which are frequently carried on by identical persons. Although this warning has a certain relevance to polite discussion, it is not important so far as the purely economic problems of capitalism are concerned. Even if all workers were capitalists and all capitalists workers, a condition which many Liberals and democrats in England and America urge, and if distinct classes of persons on either side of the institution of capitalism ceased to exist altogether, the relevant problems would still remain unsolved. The question of the efficiency of capitalism is logically quite distinct from the phenomenon of historical discontent, which may well be mollified by a wider distribution of profits. It is this distinction which many people, both Marxists and Liberals, tend to overlook.

If the structural problems of capitalism, then, are not concerned with the distribution of profits, then what are they concerned with? They are concerned with the sheer efficiency of the profit motive in the business of

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the satisfaction of wants. An efficient economy would be one that employed all of the available resources of a community, both human and material, in such a way as to realise some consciously deliberated end or goal, having regard to the existing quantum of knowledge and wisdom at any time. Capitalism performs this function only in part. The resources of the world, and of each part of the world in particular, are not and never have been utilised to the full, and people do not work in ways that lead to the fulfilment of the most reasonable ends. Neither the available resources nor the existing amount of knowledge are used to anything like their possible extent. Such, in brief, is the failure of the profit system to work as it should.

Now this failure would not be of overwhelming importance if it were not for the existence of the Soviet Union, which seems to have evolved a mechanism of greater efficiency in the performance of the essential economic tasks of society. This fact, in accordance with the Darwinian law of natural selection, has changed the complexion of history. It is having the effect of rendering the capitalist forms of society the weaker protagonists in the historical struggle for the survival of the fittest. This struggle is evidenced by the appearance of small but growing minorities of people in every capitalist country who demand a

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fundamental re-adaptation to the new circumstances. History will show whether we shall respond to the present challenge of opportunity, or whether that challenge, in the course of the struggle, will assume the proportions, not merely of opportunity, but of necessity.

Few deny that the goods produced by capitalism with modern equipment and good labour are efficiently produced, or that the standard of living of most people shows a distinct tendency to rise, in the long run, in the advanced capitalist countries. Technically, capitalism has the appearance of success. Good motor cars, good radio sets, good silk stockings, good tobacco, all can be produced under capitalism with astonishing skill. What, then, remains to be done? Is not that enough? Many people are still inclined to say: "Yes; that is all one can expect from humanity under present circumstances." This "human nature" view of the matter, as we have seen, is expressed only by the personally satisfied strata. The Communist, and the modern Russian, shouts: "No, it is not enough," as loud as he possibly dare, having regard to the personal dangers attached to saying anything so obvious.

The problem that remains to be solved is that of employing *all* the available resources for the production of the maximum quantity and quality of the

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things people wish to consume. There exist means of satisfying wants that are not used at all, and, if they are used, there is no certainty that they are used for the production of things people really want most. Tools and workers are idle, and unnecessarily idle. The argument that it does not pay to employ them is not good enough. If it does not pay, then it is the profit motive that is at fault. If profits will not make it possible to employ people, then some other method must obviously be devised. If people continue to remain satisfied with the "it-does-not-pay" argument, then, in the coming years, they will gradually find themselves utterly outstripped, in the survival struggle, by the people of the Soviet Union. Logically, so long as labour exists at all, it is always possible to employ it in the production of goods that people need. If monetary difficulties intervene, then it is the monetary system that is at fault, not "human nature." The monetary system, being a mere creation of the human intelligence, may be abolished or altered by that intelligence.

Let us consider some of the aspects of the general weakness of capitalism in greater detail.

In Britain, more than a third of the entire adult population of South Wales is unemployed, whilst sixty per cent of the entire population of the

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country is actually undernourished every day. Almost everybody is fed, housed, clothed and warmed to an extent that is far below the standard technically possible with the available resources. Millions in receipt of miserable relief or living on their friends and relatives are actually slowly starving, a state of affairs described by official statisticians, in order to avoid political unrest, as "malnutrition." The working powers and the creative faculties of children, the adult workers of the future, are stunted by a failure of the technical system to be adapted to the physical possibilities of the age. Again, the hospitals (except those used by the very well off) are so badly financed by private charity that they can afford neither to nurse nor to feed patients in their care adequately. In the English hospitals thousands of pounds are wasted in expensive schemes for raising money, and almost every hospital lives precariously from hand to mouth on a basis of unplanned charity. I need not extend the list of such incidental failures of capitalism to work in accordance with the dictates of elementary reason. In almost every case, those who regard the condition of capitalism as satisfactory are in some way personally concerned for its maintenance. Those who suffer under its defects see them more realistically. They are also the more numerous section of society.

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In addition to the failure of labour and resources to get used at all, many resources, under capitalism, are strenuously utilised only in the wastage of time. Millions are engaged in activities that produce no wealth whatever, such as the greater part of advertising, which covers every newspaper and street, together with a vast amount of clerical work connected with finance. Thousands, in every city, spend their vital energy in offices, shifting small pieces of paper from one spot to another. This is the endless labour involved in the purely speculative activity of people who produce no material goods nor anything either of æsthetic or intellectual value. I spent over two years in a great international financial house. Most of the loans we made were of vast sums of money to concerns which did virtually nothing but "make turns" in securities on the Stock Exchange. Vast amounts of money were lent to other concerns for the purpose of buying gold and hoarding it. Thousands of workers in South Africa are labouring to produce lumps of metal that can satisfy no vital needs whatever. Hours and hours of the labour of clerks and typists were spent on behalf of people speculating in foreign currencies, making marks on small pieces of paper which, by the ton, might have been used for useful sanitary purposes. Again, in the field of real work, valuable and physically

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wanted resources are daily destroyed. Crops are ploughed under or destroyed when ripe. Fish are thrown back into the sea. Restriction schemes in every single commodity market in the world actually restrict the quantity of commodities extracted from the earth. All of this logically insane wastage of life and work is designed solely to raise prices, which can only be done by increasing that precious scarcity upon which capitalism depends for its very existence. If all the labour, machines and resources of the world were working to the full, our standard of living would be fabulously higher than it is to-day. Yet capitalism, in order to survive in its planless, cut-throat existence, must prevent such an event from coming about by every scheme at its disposal. In other words, in order to bolster an outmoded form of social organisation, upon which certain persons depend for their peculiar livelihoods, we may use neither our hands nor our brains in accordance with the elementary logic and wisdom that we already possess. In England there exist a large number of coal-mines and miners capable of hewing coal from the bowels of the earth. A very large number of these workers and mines are permanently idle. Yet, quite apart from the question of foreign markets, almost every housewife in the country could do with an extra bag of coal for household

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purposes. Again, cotton is ploughed under in America, mills are idle in Lancashire and yet people are going about in ragged clothes. Generally, so long as people cannot find jobs, and so long as people want the goods such persons could produce, there is something wrong. I believe there is only one way to put that something right, and I believe the Russians have discovered it. Moreover, I believe that the degree of failure in the capitalist system that I have described is alone sufficient to spell the historical doom of this particular method of organising work. Either the free will of enterprising humanity will change the monetary and economic system, or the "divine discontent" of the masses, in the near future, will rise to such a terrible heat that the controllers of the existing system will be faced with personal annihilation. As we have seen in the last chapter, this is the way things tend to happen in history.

If academic economic theory could make any practicable suggestions for solving the problems of capitalism, it might justify its existence as anything but an interesting pastime. In fact, such suggestions as economists are obliged to make are either of a trivial order or largely impracticable. Some of them can be applied, but none touch more than the fringe of the problem, and all capitalist governments, in their secret hearts, have now come to realise the impossibility of

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patching capitalism much further. In this they are reasonable, for the will for radical changes is still very weak among the people of capitalist countries. Everybody, in fact, waits patiently for nothing whatever to happen. This state of affairs is known as confidence. We neither go backwards, forwards, sideways nor downwards. We embrace no extremes. We have confidence. Mr. Baldwin says so, and he is right. Mr. Attlee has nothing to say, and says nothing accordingly. Yet, despite our powerful and all-embracing optimism, the process of natural selection, the struggle for the survival of the fittest among the forms of economic organisation will weed capitalism out of history, together with its Liberal theorists and apologists. This will happen in spite of the mythologies of constitutional monarchy, the mysterious hypnotic efficiency of the word Empire and the sanctity of written constitutions. It is the continued consideration of the material achievements of the Soviet Union which, I firmly believe, will elicit the initial curiosity upon which the fundamental re-adaptation will be based.

Let us take a few of the suggestions of orthodox economists, suggestions from which even their authors, as reasonable men, expect no more than a fractional amelioration of the position.

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Until a few months ago Professors Robbins and Hayek, of London, and Professor Mises of Vienna, were utter deflationists. Now, I believe, the deflationism of the former two, at any rate, is not quite so utter. They believe, however, that the only remedy for a depression is to reduce wages and to go on reducing them until it pays to employ people. Their suggestion is actually not quite so simple as that, but that is the substance of it from the point of view of immediate policy. We need not go into the complicated reasons for this policy, which, I believe, are accurate enough. Indeed, it is not the accuracy of the deflationist analysis of the situation with which I am concerned, but with the possibility of putting the remedy into effect. Unfortunately, as has been seen in France and South Wales and Spain, such a solution is incompatible with the existence of democracy. Wages can only be reduced on a sufficient scale by force, as in Germany and Italy, where all strike activity in protest is forbidden. Even in Fascist countries, however, there is a limit to belt-tightening beyond which people tend to become annoyed. If people are allowed to vote, they will vote for a reversal of the policy. Yet throughout the entire depression, the economic staff of the London School of Economics had virtually nothing better to suggest than downright deflation.

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Mr. Keynes and the majority of economists in England and America are in favour of programmes of public works. By this means, described as "reflation" (inflation of a sort), they hope to avoid the political consequences of the policy of deflation. They see the source of the problem in a failure of money to get invested. In times of depression, and for all kinds of psychological reasons, "lack of confidence" prevents capitalists from taking the ordinary risks of investment. Thus, anything which causes a revival of "confidence," thus inducing investors to take a more optimistic view of things, may bring savings and hoardings out of their holes and cause a business recovery. The expenditure by governments of vast sums of money upon public works, by forcing money into circulation and increasing the demand for all kinds of goods, may start a minor recovery, which, in turn, may gather further and further momentum. This general line of reasoning is behind Mr. Roosevelt's great schemes, the Tennessee Valley scheme, the great bridge at San Francisco, his re-afforestation policy and others. In England we have a big re-armament programme, a *Queen Mary* and all sorts of devices (The Slum Clearance Acts) for continuing the house-building programme after the boom in private building comes an end, which it must in due course.

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Now schemes of public works, together with any political factors making for the stimulation of the illusive factor of "confidence," are, I believe, the only feasible lines open to any of the governments of capitalist countries during times of depression.

Some of the arguments for and against public works are as follows. It is important for us to consider them, for, in doing so, we illustrate various ways in which the Soviet system profoundly differs from capitalism.

Arguments for public works. (a) By paying money to government employees and contractors on public works, people are enabled to purchase goods which they urgently require. Thus, public works do certainly serve the ethical end of causing a more "equitable" distribution of wealth.

(b) Private enterprise cannot look very far ahead. It may be desirable to invest savings for very long periods, such as in re-afforestation schemes, big power stations and long railway tunnels. Public works certainly enable work of this kind to be undertaken on a big scale.

(c) They may cause the psychological conditions of recovery.

Arguments against public works. (a) One difficulty is that public works, undertaken by a capitalist government, must avoid competition with existing private

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enterprise. This means that governments are prevented from engaging in any tasks already performed to some extent by private enterprise. Thus they cannot provide people *directly* with things like food, drink, clothing and fuel, which, in times of depression, people most need. To do so would involve selling these things in competition with existing enterprise, which, by bankrupting private concerns, would make the problem worse. Therefore, governments can only invest money in all sorts of things not immediately and urgently required. Thus, when people need elementary consumption goods, to devote large quantities of labour to the production of things like transatlantic liners for carrying tourists about on the Atlantic Ocean, or thousands of miles of beautiful roads for the use of middle-class motor cars, or strips of elegant park railings, is somehow wrong.

Moreover, if a government must adopt a policy of public works every time there is a severe loss of ordinary business confidence, this means that, in course of time, public works must become more and more useless as the useful schemes are completed. Yet, since during each depression the elementary needs of the working class remain unsatisfied, this progressive uselessness of public works must assume ever more glaring proportions. It means that, although

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in each depression people go hungry and miserable, yet, each time the government steps in to rectify the matter, we must have more and more miles of park railings, more and more expensive liners and so on. Somewhere common sense is insulted.

(b) It must also be remembered that governments in capitalist countries can, in times of depression, only invest money in such works as will not greatly increase the running costs of government. Big capital works of certain kinds involve a large financial outlay, but very little subsequent expenditure. On the other hand, many schemes, such as the provision of schools, hospitals, clinics and universities, involve not merely a large initial outlay but a heavy continuous expenditure afterwards. This latter expenditure must fall directly upon the national budget, and the anxiety lest the budget may not be balanced, or lest taxation may have to be increased in the future, must be increased. They are therefore ruled out as defeating the main object in view, namely, that of reviving confidence.

(c) There is the danger that, as soon as confidence is restored, the fact that much capital has been expended on public works of a necessarily rather useless kind (i.e. not urgently needed) will cause an immediate shortage of money for investment in ordinary private enterprise. Thus, when the "boom" comes, it will be

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found that public works have, in fact, interfered with public enterprise.

(d) It may well happen that some additional psychological factor, such as a war or the disastrous elopement and marriage of a constitutional monarch, or some antic of Mr. de Valera or the Mahatma Gandhi, or the conversion of Mr. Baldwin to Communism, may cause the "lack of confidence" to continue, in spite of the public works. What then? In these circumstances, either the government must advance from one scheme to another, each more useless than the last, till finally thousands of persons are engaged in building scenic railways up Snowdon or swimming baths on the roof of the House of Commons or the Government must give up the task altogether. If "loss of confidence" persists, the hungry and undernourished workers will either find a Communist government of their own, or the capitalist class itself will prefer to abolish its own system. In any case, it will be the crying need of people to utilise resources and labour according to a Plan, satisfying most important needs first, and leaving transatlantic tourists to their fate, which will be the basis of the essential change.

Another difficulty of capitalism is that of "raising capital" for enterprise.

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Non-consumable goods like machinery, factories, office buildings and ships, i.e. the things the economists describe as capital goods, or means of production, are paid for out of savings. Rich and moderately rich people cannot possibly spend the whole of their monetary resources. They consequently invest the remainder in stocks and shares. Companies receiving money for these stocks and shares in turn use it for building real capital goods, and hope that they will be able to reap a profit and pay interest to the original lenders of the savings.

Now, if capitalism really worked as it is supposed to do, it would always be possible to employ savings profitably, just as it would always be possible for people to find jobs. All people, except lunatics, children and invalids, are capable, with their hands or brains, of producing wealth of some kind, even if it be by the dullest work. Similarly, in a rational society all monetary savings should be used somehow or other. Yet, for various complicated reasons described by economists, all savings simply do not get invested in the production of capital goods. Instead, large amounts of savings lie idle in banks or float about the money market like idle women at tea parties. Monetary savings, instead of being used to pay the wages of workers engaged in building factories, are spent on

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lumps of gold to be hoarded in the vaults of banks. Others are spent in sheer gambling in securities and commodities. Others just do nothing, like the unfortunate workers they ought to be providing with tools. In other words, capital itself is not doing the whole of its job.

One of the main reasons why people with savings are unable to invest their money in real, productive industry is that they are rightly afraid that such investment will not "earn" any profits. In other words, they lack confidence. Then again, the taxation of the profits of a rich man is so steep that he will not invest his money unless the expected profits are going to be so great as to compensate him for his losses by way of taxation. Thus, the higher the rate of taxation, the greater the tendency of people to spend their savings rather than invest them in industry. Taxation has the effect of reducing the profitability of all investment, especially such as involves a risk, and causes many people to spend their money on useless luxuries, rather than upon useful capital goods. That is the reason why there is a limit to direct taxation beyond which a capitalist government cannot go, however many Socialists are in the cabinet. Any increase in taxation beyond a certain point must cause a loss of confidence in the minds of investors. On the other hand, it is

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precisely at periods of depression, when dole and other social expenses are most costly, that taxation has somehow to be increased. Here again is a pretty dilemma in the sweet path of capitalism, a dilemma that simply does not exist in the Soviet Union. In England and America, on the other hand, thousands of very small business men are only too keen to borrow money from capitalists, yet capitalists cannot lend their savings, either on account of uncertainty or because the level of taxation causes them to demand a rate of interest that nobody can possibly afford to pay. The small man, therefore, does not get his money, the rich man does not get his profits, and it is ten to one that the Government cannot balance its budget.

Then, in order to sell anything, under capitalism, it is necessary to advertise it. Yet, unless the thing you have to sell is really vastly superior to the goods sold by your competitors, you must tell people, in your advertisements, that your particular commodity is the very best in the world. The fact that everybody else producing the same kind of stuff also tells the world that his commodity is unrivalled, does not prevent you from doing likewise. Indeed, it obliges you to do so. If you do not tell lies about your goods nobody will buy them.

This moral misfortune would, of course, be

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distressing, but not unamusing, if it were not for the fact that advertising is so expensive. Consider all the otherwise valuable labour and machinery that must be used up in telling people, in the first place, what is not true, and in the second place they are not in the least anxious to hear. Who, except Mr. Smith, is anxious to be told that Smith's Hair Oil, in two-shilling bottles, will prevent grey hair, which it won't? Who wants to be told that Myrna Loy and Clark Gable are "Now featuring in the most stupendous moving picture ever presented to the public," which is highly improbable? Yet how can Mr. Smith or the Paramount Picture Co., Inc., or whichever organisation controls the destinies of the unfortunate actors, sell their abominations unless they expend vast sums of money and employ thousands of otherwise useful people in telling fibs? Everyone will agree that under capitalism it is not physically possible.

The proper function of advertising, clearly, should be that of telling people things that are, firstly, approximately true, and, secondly, things they would probably like to know. Under capitalism, advertising is almost entirely a gigantic waste of life. Most of the labour and resources at present employed in making advertisements ought, under a rational system, to be used for producing goods that people want.

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"The forces operating in society work exactly like the forces operating in Nature: blindly, violently, destructively, so long as we do not understand them and fail to take them into account. But when once we have recognised them and understood how they work, their direction and their effects, the gradual subjection of them to our will and the use of them for the attainment of our aims depend entirely upon ourselves. And this is quite especially true of the mighty productive forces of the present day. So long as we obstinately refuse to understand their nature and their character . . . and the capitalist mode of production and its defenders set themselves against any such attempt . . . so long do they control us. . . . But once their nature is grasped, in the hands of the producers working in association, they can be transformed from demoniac masters into willing servants. This is the difference between the destructive force of electricity in a thunderstorm and the tamed electricity of the telegraph and the arc light; the difference between a conflagration and a fire in the service of man."

So wrote Frederick Engels in 1877.* Since then the inhabitants of the Soviet Union have carried this philosophy into actual everyday practice. It

* *Anti-Dühring*, Part III.

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remains for us in the next section, again without tears, to say something of the ways in which the above problems are solved in that country. It will, I think, be seen that, whatever historical forces may have been responsible for the establishment of Socialism in Russia, the people in that country have faced a challenge that still lies ahead for the rest of us.

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THE previous appendix, despite its flavour of triviality, was entirely abstract, theoretical and respectable. It dealt with capitalistic problems in general, with only an occasional reference to things like Welsh miners, Lancashire cotton-spinners and Hollywood film stars by way of illustration. In this chapter let us deal with the abstract and dry-bones of the Soviet approach to these same problems. Let us take each of the problems discussed in the last chapter in turn.

Firstly, there is the problem of idle resources, both human and material. With regard to this problem Soviet economy works upon an extremely simple principle. The only limits to the employment of resources need be: (*a*) the limits imposed by the nature of the physical world and (*b*) the judgments of mankind as to the degree of utilisation of such resources that is at any time desirable. Thus, at any moment, only a fixed number of workers and only a fixed amount of raw material, land and machinery exist for any kind of utilisation whatever. These are the physical limits. Yet, in the flow of time, these limits are constantly

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changing. Population may increase and decrease, raw materials and fixed capital goods get used up, whilst new materials and ways of doing things are constantly being invented and discovered. At any moment of time, however, the amount of wealth that can be produced is necessarily determined by the conditions of the universe.

With regard to the judgments of mankind as to the amount of work desirable, these may change in various important ways. Firstly, it may be deemed desirable for people to work either less or more, for some to work harder than others, or for all to work equally hard. This is a matter of policy, and may be settled by the Government autocratically, oligarchically, democratically or as you will. Secondly, judgments have to be made about the sorts of work to be done. These, in Soviet Economy, must be made by the state, and other collective organs, and the essence of the system lies in their supreme control of such decisions. Judgments, above all, have to be made as to whether people are to save more and consume less, or consume more and save less. Translated into real terms, this decision turns upon whether labour and raw materials are to be devoted either to the production of things like mines, machinery and factories, or whether they are to be utilised for making goods to be consumed in a

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comparatively short time, such as films, ice-creams, champagne and sausages. In making such decisions it must be clear to the planners that any labour devoted to the production of capital goods, or goods for increasing the total amount of consumption goods in the comparatively distant future, must be taken away from industries producing goods to be consumed at the moment. In other words, people may have either more railway engines and less ice-cream or more ice-cream and less railway engines. In the long run, it should be borne in mind, an increase in the total quantity of consumption goods, in the absence of unforeseen inventions and discoveries, can be produced only as a result of greater saving, that is to say, a continuous increase in the amount of capital goods. This is one of the most important principles of economics, and applies to all kinds of imaginable society, capitalist or Communist. It is the mechanical means by which this principle expresses itself, however, that is one of the primary differences between Soviet and capitalist economy. With regard to basic economic realities, such as saving and spending, the Soviet economy as a whole is in a position rather like that of a private individual under capitalism. The private individual may either save, in which case he goes without various things now in order to have

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more in the future, or vice versa. The difference between the judgments of the individual under capitalism and those of the community under Communism is that the former are made in terms of money and the latter in terms of labour. The Soviet community may devote labour to the production of things for the nearer or the remoter future. In the former case it "spends": in the latter it "saves."

Since, either directly or indirectly, the Soviet Government controls all the labour power in the community, it is in a position to make all these various decisions consciously and deliberately. The State Planning Commission in Moscow knows fairly well what material resources are available for exploitation from moment to moment and, on the other hand, it knows how many workers of all kinds are available for employment. On the basis of this knowledge pragmatic plans can be made in such a way that the physical and human limits of production may be attained continuously and the economic life of the community proceed in any desired direction whatever. It is in this sense that the Soviet economy claims to have reached the Socialistic stage described by Engels, in *Anti-Dühring*, as follows:

"The conditions of existence forming man's environment which, up to now, have dominated man, at this

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point pass under the dominion and control of man, who now, for the first time, becomes the real conscious master of Nature, because and in so far as he has become the master of his own social organisation. . . . Men's own social organisation which has hitherto stood in opposition to them as if arbitrarily decreed by Nature and history, will then become the voluntary act of men themselves. . . . It is only from this point that the social causes set in motion by men will have, predominantly and in increasing measure, the effects willed by men. It is humanity's leap from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom."*

At this stage, now realised in the Soviet economy, the old common-sense axioms, such as: "More work, less play," "A stitch in time saves nine," "Too many cooks spoil the broth," "The more the merrier," and so on, become, not *naïvetés* to be expunged from the academic mind before the mysterious substance or "hidden hand" of economics can be visualised, but actual principles of everyday action. "Equilibrium" between saving and spending, supply and demand, production and distribution, ceases to be analytical subtleties suitable only for the learned discussions of post-graduate students at universities, but ordinary matters of life. This does not mean that these things,

* Anti-Dühring, Part III.

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in a proper academic atmosphere of rarefaction, are in any way boring. Besides being a waste of life, they are what is known as "good intellectual disciplines." As a professor of pure economics once said, with his feet on the mantelshelf: "Economics is *such* a delectable subject."

Under Soviet collectivism, on the other hand, economic theory is simple. What, for instance, is demand? Demand is the approximate nature of people's wants. What is supply? Supply is just supply, nothing more nor less. What is saving? Saving is the devotion of labour to the production of goods in the future. What is spending? Spending is the devotion of labour to the production of goods to be consumed in the short period.

Under capitalism, although the answers to these questions are, of course, ultimately the same as those given above, the intellectual difficulties of arriving at them are immense and the confusion of the public mind quite astonishing. The debacle of Communism is that it knocks all the mystery out of economics and nobody has any difficulty in understanding its first principles at all.

What of the problem of surplus goods? Surplus piles of commodities in the Soviet Union can come into existence only by chance or as the result of

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miscalculation in planning. An extra large haul of fish or a large fruit crop might conceivably create a temporary problem as to what to do with the stocks, but at most, if people did not want to eat these things, they could be used for manure. Only in extremely rare circumstances could stocks of anything appear for which no rational use could be found. Miscalculation might cause a plethora of some commodity, the obvious remedy for which would be to transfer the redundant labour to some other point in the system, which would involve a slight adjustment of the plan, or the workers, having "overfulfilled" the plan in their particular line, could be given a holiday until they were required again. Unless there is an actual shortage of food, clothing and shelter, there is no need for workers to go without these things because they have produced "too much" of anything. Only a real scarcity can cause a real hardship. Many surpluses, on the other hand, may not be accidental, but deliberate. At the present moment it is the aim of Soviet economy to produce so much wheat as to create a store to be used in case of bad harvests or war. Indeed, it may even be considered worth while economising on food now in order to build up such a store for the future. Under capitalism such stores are built up, not because it has been decided that people may actually require

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a certain commodity in the future, but because certain clever speculators, by holding supplies off the market, may *cause* the scarcity and reap a high profit out of the ensuing high prices. There is no commodity market that is not, largely by means of restriction schemes, rigged in this way. Under Fascism, of course, speculation may be controlled to some extent and necessary surpluses may be accumulated by decree, as when the Italian Government obliges foreign oil refining companies to maintain stocks of oil to assist Mussolini in future wars, all of which, designed to conquer new markets for capitalism, are aggressive. Note that Fascism attempts to force capitalism to work properly, whilst the Soviet economy does without it altogether. It is significant that Italy has many hundreds of thousands of unemployed workers, and is totally unable to balance her budget, whilst the Soviet Union has simply done away with such problems.*

* Many communists and socialists argue, I believe wrongly, that fascism, being simply capitalism supported by a regime of force, must necessarily, in virtue of the deepening misery of the proletariat, generate despair and revolution. The deepening misery of the proletariat is supposed to follow from the laws of economic theory. Mr. John Strachey argues along these lines. I personally disagree with this way of reasoning. My reading of economic theory leads me to the view that there is no economic law prescribing either a deepening misery of the working class under capitalism, or any tendency for the rich to get richer and the poor poorer. Modern capitalist economists, I believe, have succeeded in showing that no such inevitable laws exist. (See F. H. Knight, *Risk, Uncertainty and Profit*; Philip Wicksteed, *The Commonsense of Political Economy*; Böhm Bawerk, *The Positive Theory of Capital*; J. R. Hicks, *The Theory of Wages*; F. A. Hayek, *Prices and Production*; F. W. Taussig, *International Trade*.)

I believe that fascism will fail, not because capitalism cannot somehow be bolstered by force, but because a more efficient system, namely collectivism,

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Consider next the problem of "raising money" for any kind of enterprise. In the Soviet Union this problem is dealt with, roughly, in the following way.

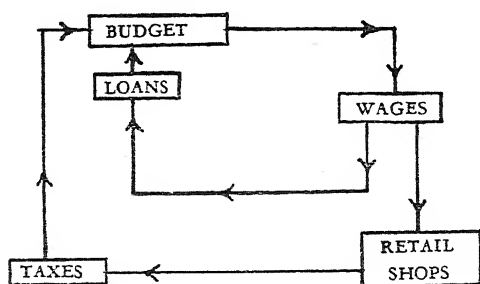
The sums of money required for long-period investment in industry are derived from grants from the unified national budget, through the intermediate mechanism of the long-period credit banks. The budget revenue is derived mainly from turnover taxes on the value of raw material produce and from profit taxes on state enterprises. Since the taxes are merely handed on to the consumer, this means that Soviet "capital," instead of being derived from voluntary savings through the medium of a stock exchange and money market, as under capitalism, is derived from indirect taxation, or what our economists call "forced saving." A certain amount of budget revenue is also derived from state loans, or monetary savings in the ordinary sense. The value of such loans does not fluctuate and the total internal debt is distributed among some forty-five millions of working-class

will perform all the material tasks of society more efficiently than any kind of capitalism. On account of the existence of the Soviet Union, this will come to be recognised. In English communist thought there is too much easy reliance upon an "inevitable collapse of capitalism" and upon a "final crisis." Orthodox economists have no radical remedies for capitalism's various diseases, but they do not all predict its downfall, and not all of them are fools. Capitalism, like Carthage, must be destroyed. We cannot afford to rest satisfied with a passive belief that it will destroy itself.

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bondholders, who purchase their holdings on an instalment system. The internal debt serves two functions. In the first place, it amounts to a subordinate form of social insurance; in the second, it absorbs surplus monetary funds arising from a slight tendency to inflation, the technical nature of which is interesting, but not of basic importance to us in this book.

Savings, then, whether derived from indirect taxation or from loans, pass straight into the national budget, without the medium of any stock exchange, and all are spent, when and where required, on the wages of people employed in building capital goods. One may think instructively of a simple circulatory system thus:



The savings of the community, therefore, are not invested, as in capitalist countries, by private persons and firms who hope to reap a profit (this is the logical essence of capitalism), but directly by the government,

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which collects savings out of taxes. Investment does not depend, therefore, upon the "confidence" or lack of confidence of individuals, but upon the action of the government in pursuance of the plan. Lack of confidence, in the Soviet Union, is expressed by increases in the strength of the Red Army, but not in "financial" instability and unemployment.

Various interesting side issues are of importance here. It is clear that monetary savings, in the Soviet Union, are mainly compulsory, in the sense that the housewife, when she makes a purchase in a shop, is obliged to pay a tax included in the price of her purchase, a tax which goes into the national budget as part of the savings of the community. It may be asked, does not such a system result in unfairness to the poorest workers, who, since the beginning of the year 1935, are obliged to pay the same prices for goods as the better-paid workers? The defect is made up to some extent by taxing certain luxuries, such as radio sets and gramophones, much more heavily than things like bread, and also by the fact that all earn salaries, and nobody receives unplanned profits, which oblige all capitalist systems to introduce a system of progressive taxation. In Russia taxation is only progressive to the extent that higher-paid workers purchase more heavily taxed goods. Income tax is practically

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number of unfortunate people, who are in no way responsible, lose their jobs. The least skilled and therefore least responsible members of the firm find most difficulty in getting other jobs, whilst the most responsible, usually possessing other means and superior ability, are able somehow to shift for themselves. In the Soviet Union inefficiency is rewarded by the dismissal of the inefficient individuals, and not by the overwhelming disaster of bankruptcy to the entire concern. The unskilled worker remains always at work, and is given all sorts of inducements, in the forms of better pay and opportunities for study, to take a more responsible job. In this way the doctrine of the "survival of the fittest" is incorporated into conscious policy, instead of being left to "work itself out," as under capitalism. It is inevitable that any kind of socialist system must eliminate the capitalist inducements to efficiency, namely, the fears of bankruptcy. In the Soviet Union, however, this lack of stimulus is compensated by periodical purgings of all responsible posts in exceedingly democratic ways. All Party members are obliged to go through gruelling tests. Every member is hailed periodically before a tribunal, in the presence of all his fellow-workers, who may fire any questions at him, relating to his work at the bench, his private habits and his domestic life.

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Unless he can answer these questions in public to the satisfaction of his fellow-workers he is invariably cautioned or fired from the party with ignominy. Communist social philosophy is nothing if not democratic, in this matter, and competition of every kind is intense. To what extent the success in finding substitutes for the profit motive may be attributed to the burning keenness of the revolutionary fervour is a very important problem. I believe that no form of socialism can succeed without a mass basis of exceedingly exacting pressure upon all those who aspire to hold positions of responsibility and power. It is for this reason that those in capitalist countries who declare that the Soviet system makes "no allowance for individuals" or crushes the elementary instincts of private enterprise, are deeply mistaken. The fact is that the ambitious man, in modern Russia, has ambition for power, rather than for money, and that the powerful man holds his position only so long as he remains popular and efficient in the eyes of the working class. Responsibility, in other words, is much more literal and individual in the Soviet Union than elsewhere. The rewards for power in Russia consist, not so much in money and a display of wealth as in the satisfaction of enjoying the praise of millions of workers.

Returning to the question of bankruptcy, it will be

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understood that, in Russia, only in accordance with planned decision can a works close down, say, because the workers and materials are required for some other purpose. The notion of a concern closing down for "financial reasons" is regarded as absurd. In the language of economics, this means that money, in the Soviet Union, has lost its function as a "store of value," but retains it only as a "unit of account." Nobody can employ labour and resources merely because he possesses money, but only in accordance with the plan of economic development as a whole. This can only be the case because no individuals own the means of production, the machines and tools that are worked, under capitalism, by "employees." Machines, factories, railways and other social tools, in Russia, are not "owned" by anybody at all. They are simply built and constructed and worked by the people for whose benefit they exist.

What of advertising in the Soviet Union? Advertising is employed only to notify the public of definite novelties or of matters of general importance. Besides advertisements of meetings, elections, concerts, lectures and entertainments, notices of "situations vacant" are important, and notices of new kinds of goods for sale in the shops. The typical advertisement of the capitalist country, designed to induce people to spend

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money, is entirely absent. In England the Distillers Company Ltd. produces all the popular brands of whisky which, in flavour and appearance, are all almost identical. Yet the advertisements for the various brands, exceedingly costly in labour and materials to the whole community, are supposed to give the impression that the brands are made by different firms and are genuinely competing articles. This sort of thing, of course, is unheard of in Russia.

The question is invariably asked: "But does not collectivism involve a dreadful uniformity in the nature of the things produced?" The answer is that, by comparison with Western standards, at the moment, it certainly does produce a certain uniformity. Yet, even so, the lack of variety is far less distressing than one would imagine.* A visit to the Soviet Union

* Professor T. N. Whitehead, in a book, *Leadership in a Free Society* (Oxford, 1937), makes certain interesting suggestions connected with the uniformity and standardisation of goods. Any manufactured commodity may be said to consist in an end, or final product, which in turn is composed of various components. Now, under capitalism, such components are usually manufactured by a multitude of different firms in many different patterns, for the purpose of usage in the making of different fashion types of end products. Professor Whitehead suggests that much waste could be eliminated by special trade agreements which would deliberately standardise sub-components, whilst leaving end products to vary with changing fashions. This is obviously an excellent suggestion, and it is applied in various ways, e.g. electric fittings. In the Soviet Union, such standardisation of sub-components may be enormously increased, Nuts, bolts and screws and chassis, etc., may be all made to uniform patterns, but used in all sorts of different types of motor cars and lorries, etc. It should be remembered that it is only the variety of end products that vitally affects the consumer. Variety of sub-components is valuable only for research purposes, and it can be encouraged, in the Soviet Union, in this way. But the mere variety which arises out of the confusion of capitalism is obviously a source of very great waste.

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tends to surprise most people in this matter. Moreover, although it is probably true that the absence of the wholly commercial inducement to sell things must always be the condition of a certain uniformity, such variety as exists under Soviet collectivism is, I think, healthy and vigorous. For it does not spring from that desperate anxiety of the inhabitants of capitalist countries, who are driven to sell something or to starve slowly to death on the dole. In Russia the emphasis of life is upon the *making*, rather than the *selling* of things. The importance of commerce is reduced to rational proportions.

In this chapter I have tried to show how, again without tears, the idea of Communism, as it is interpreted in the Soviet Union, actually removes some of the economic and financial problems that are quite insoluble under our own system. This is the material basis upon which the entire Communist outlook rests or falls. If the West, in its moral indignation at some of the aspects of Russian Communism, goes to war with the Soviet Union, it will meet with a few surprises. Thus, we must face the issue of the Communist challenge, whether we like it or not, but especially if we are young.

